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ABSTRACT

Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse society is an important consideration in the role of adult literacy and numeracy in lifelong learning and socioeconomic well-being. A case study highlights the complexities diversity brings to development of language and literacy practices and challenges facing educators in developing a culturally inclusive vision for a literate Australia. Focus is on differences and similarities of adult literacy and basic education (ALBE) and English as a second language (ESL) and pedagogical implications of combining learners from English-speaking background (ESB) with learners with ESL needs in ALBE settings. Definitional issues have further blurred boundaries between ALBE and ESL since needs of both learner groups and pedagogical practices to meet them are similar. Focus group and individual interviews demonstrate practitioners' awareness of the importance of understanding the complex sociocultural, linguistic, educational, motivational, and individual factors that impact on learner needs. Research reveals that literacy learners from language backgrounds other than English have particular needs not necessarily addressed in ESL or ALBE classrooms. Views from the field emphasize concerns about the invisibility of learners from ESB with literacy needs. Further work is needed to integrate the best of ALBE theory and practice with insights of ESL theory and practice to meet needs of all learners. (Appendixes include 137 references and focus group questions, questionnaire and characteristics of adult and ESL learners.) (YLB)

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Discourses of Greyness and Diversity

Revisiting the ALBE and ESL interface

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Liz Suda

An investigation by the Victorian Centre

Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium (ALNARC)

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Executive summary

In considering the role of adult literacy and numeracy in lifelong learning and socio–economic wellbeing, it is important to acknowledge that Australia is a culturally and linguistically diverse society. This case-study highlights some of the complexities that such diversity brings to the development of language and literacy practices that might contribute to socio -economic wellbeing, and some of the challenges facing educators in developing a culturally inclusive vision for a literate Australia.

Recent initiatives by the Commonwealth Government in the area of Language and Literacy (DETYA 2001) suggest that ESL and literacy are being conflated for ease and efficiency of implementation, possibly also economic expediency. These policy shifts have caused considerable debate within the fields of Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) and English as a Second Language (ESL). The paper develops a critical discursive narrative of the complex and diverse, but interconnected, discourses that converge at the interface between ALBE and ESL. In particular it draws out the theoretical underpinnings of practitioner discourses. The differences and similarities of ALBE and ESL and the pedagogical implications of combining learners from English speaking background (ESB) with learners who have ESL needs, in ALBE settings, is therefore the major focus of this case.

Definitions of language and literacy have become the subject of much political debate, thereby adding complexity to the task of establishing clear parameters for pedagogy and provision within the fields of ALBE and ESL. Definitions of literacy now include a broad range of information processing skills including spoken language, and it is this elaboration, in part, which has contributed to the conflation of language and literacy in policy terms. Definitional issues have therefore further blurred the boundaries between ALBE and ESL, as there are many similarities between the needs of both learner groups and the pedagogical practices that are employed to meet those needs.

In attempting to penetrate practitioner discourses, the research reveals that the underpinning values, beliefs and assumptions about the needs of learners are complicated. The focus group interviews and individual interviews demonstrate awareness amongst practitioners of the importance of understanding the complex socio-cultural, linguistic, educational, motivational and individual factors which impact on learner needs. The research reveals that learners from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE) who have literacy needs have particular needs, which are not necessarily addressed in either ESL classrooms or ALBE classrooms. The views from the field also emphasize concerns about the invisibility of learners from English speaking backgrounds (ESB) who have literacy needs. The amalgamation of language and literacy in terms of policy and provision may diminish an active strategy to engage ESB learners who have had negative experiences of schooling and who may lack the confidence to revisit formal learning situations.

In the analysis of the case it is evident that further work needs to be done to integrate the best of ALBE theory and practice with the insights of ESL theory and practice, to meet the needs of all learners. This will require professional development, further research and goodwill on the part of practitioners to engage in critically reflective practice and research. Finally, the analysis concludes that a unifying theme for the integration of ALBE and ESL practice is the idea of lifelong learning and socioeconomic wellbeing. A broader focus is required in the development of the language and literacy skills of all learners, irrespective of their cultural, linguistic or educational background, that is, education for the good of all.

> You mean what would I do if I were god? I would make sure that there was a diversity of provision with different kinds of groupings. Some groups that are based on gender, some on shared interests, some specifically for ESL learners,

some specifically for ALBE learners, some mixed, some with a particular content focus and in a range of contexts. The full range of further education provision and lot more of it. (Interview with IM)

1. Background

The past decade has seen significant changes in the policy and provision of ALBE and ESL with further blurring of the distinction between language proficiency and literacy capability. Recent initiatives by the Commonwealth Government in the area of Language and Literacy (DETYA 2001) suggest that ESL and literacy are being conflated for ease and efficiency of implementation, possibly also economic expediency. These policy shifts have caused considerable debate within both fields.

The pedagogical relations between ALBE and ESL were the subject of significant research in the early nineties (Hammond, Wickert, Burns, Joyce and Miller 1992), which was followed by work on ethnically inclusive practice within the ALBE classroom (Davison, Taylor and Hatcher 1993; Rado and D'Cruz 1994). Millin (1994) provides an example of a currriculum designed to meet the needs of learners with language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE), using action learning approaches appropriate in vocational education. Other work by Cameron and Howell (1994) using team teaching approaches, as well as work by Frohman (1996), demonstrate further efforts by the two fields to find common ground and learn from each other. This was highlighted by the *Extending the Agenda* forum held by the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) and the Victorian Association of TESOL and Multicultural Education (VATME) which brought together practitioners from both fields to explore these issues (VALBEC & VATME 1994).

Significant changes have continued to occur in both fields since this work was conducted, particularly with the widespread adoption of competency-based accredited curricula. The landscape of both fields has also been significantly altered by the appropriation of language and literacy into the Training Reform Agenda (Lo Bianco 2001; Kell 2001; Wickert 2001). More broadly, the ascendancy of the human capital theory and economic rationalism as the dominant ideology driving government policy has continued to have an impact on all aspects of education particularly in relation to the allocation of resources and accountability and measurement procedures (Luke 1992; Marginson 1997; Black 2002). The commodification and marketization of adult education has meant that other stakeholders, such as government agencies, industry groups and profit oriented private providers, now influence the education agenda (Marginson 1993; Jarvis 1999). The introduction of new learning technologies in response to the changing global system of communications and technologies has also shaped the changes that have occurred in the adult education sector (Lepani 1998; Leu 2001).

An increased emphasis on accountability and value for money means that teachers must focus on outcomes that meet externally determined criteria, rather than the accommodation of learner needs within the broader framework of the intrinsic value of education and the fulfillment of individual potential. Language and literacy programs have attracted increased levels of government funding during the past decade, but the stakeholders of these programs have changed significantly with the advent of competitive tendering. Private providers have therefore competed with established public providers for these funds (Angwin 2000). The move into workplaces through the Workplace English Language Literacy (WELL) program has broadened the scope of provision and the skills required by literacy providers. While some of these changes have caused concern with the two fields of ALBE and ESL, a

positive consequence of these changes has been increased attention to formal qualifications, which has in turn resulted in increased professionalism in both fields (Angwin 2000; McGuirk 2001; Riddell 2001).

The context and purpose of teacher's work in the broader adult education field has also changed dramatically in the past ten years. Adult education, once the 'Cinderella' of the education sector has also been appropriated into the Government 's reform agenda. The global call for lifelong learning as an essential element of economic wellbeing in the 21st century has highlighted the need for increased levels of language and literacy proficiency (Suda 2000). Where the two fields (ALBE and ESL) once operated independently, at the margins of the education sector, the past decade has seen both fields play a higher profile in mainstream education, particularly in the vocational education and training sector. ALBE and ESL professionals have increasingly been involved in vocational education and training and have attempted to build in language literacy and numeracy competencies and foster best practice adult learning principles in workplaces. They have done this with varying degrees of success in an ever-changing environment (Waterhouse 2001). Both fields now fear the possibility of their disciplines being conflated and absorbed into the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector as 'underpinning skills' of communication competencies required within training packages. These issues have been debated in a variety of forums within the field in recent years. One contributor to this debate, suggests a more pragmatic approach on the part of providers, arguing 'if we are to have a future role then we must continue to work with the vocational education framework' (McKenna 2001:13)

2. Aims of the research

It is against this backdrop of changing definitions, perspectives, directions and contexts, that the research aimed to revisit the interface between ALBE and ESL, and focus on situations where adult literacy teachers might encounter mixed groups of ESB learners and LBOTE learners in the same classroom. Participants in ALBE programs come from many different backgrounds and have specific cultural and linguistic learning needs. The primary objective of the research is therefore to better understand how literacy practitioners might accommodate the needs of these different learners within the one class.

The following specific questions underpinned the discussions with practitioners within the field and critical reading of the available literature:

- How does the integration of learners with ESL needs into ALBE provision impact on pedagogical practices?
- How does ALBE cater for the needs of LBOTE learners with ESL needs within community, TAFE and industry settings?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of such integration from the point of view of the learners and practitioners?
- How aware are adult literacy teachers of the different learning needs of ESB and LBOTE learners in these contexts?
- What are the implications for future policy that arise from the commonalities and differences of such learners?

3. Methodology

3.1 Case study research

Cresswell (1998) points to different types of case study research and the different formats this research approach might take, depending on how the case is defined. Case study can generate theory, simply describe a particular example or activity or be more analytical in nature. This paper sits within the parameters of case study research as defined by Cresswell in that it seeks to describe and analyse one aspect of the role of adult literacy and numeracy in lifelong learning and socioeconomic wellbeing.

In considering the role of adult literacy and numeracy in lifelong learning and socioeconomic wellbeing, it is important to acknowledge that Australia is a culturally and linguistically diverse society. This case will attempt to highlight some of the complexities that this diversity brings to the development of language and literacy practices that might contribute to socioeconomic wellbeing, and some of the challenges facing educators in developing a culturally inclusive vision for a literate Australia.

The story of how practitioners negotiate cultural and linguistic diversity in a range of settings will be developed within the context of existing theoretical positions. It will explore the complexities surrounding the interface between ALBE and ESL as evidenced in a range of contexts. The issues raised will add another dimension to how literacy and lifelong learning might contribute to the development of socioeconomic wellbeing. The case seeks to highlight the views and perceptions of practitioners because ultimately they play a significant role in the implementation of visions for an educated and prosperous society.

3.2 Literature review

The literature review informing this research includes an overview of the sociological, political and cultural underpinnings of much educational discourse including the perspective of Foucault (1972), Freire (1976), Fairclough (1989) and Habermas (in Young 1990). Within this domain there is a body of literature which focuses on policy development and the role of government in shaping educational discourses. A significant body of research exists in the area of learning English as a second language, which is informed by theories of learning as well as Linguistics (see Brown 2000, Brown and Gonzo 1995). Added to this are the discourses within the field of adult education, particularly in language and literacy, that are contextualized within adult learning theory. Existing research from within the field (especially Davison et al.1993) provides the starting point for the discussion. Many of the research participants are also writers and some of their writings are incorporated into the 'views from the field' data. The literature review therefore provides the theoretical underpinnings of the research and will inform the definitions and analysis of the case.

The title of this paper refers to the Discourses of diversity and greyness that converge at the interface between ALBE and ESL. The concept of discourse therefore requires some explanation.

> A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network'

(Gee 1990:143).

Gee here distinguishes between the concept of a discourse, which is 'connected stretches of language that make sense', and the concept of Discourse with a capital D, which is related to the identification of a social network and the practice of language in that network. Social network can mean the local football club, mothers' group or literature group but it also refers to groups of policy makers, educational theorists, practitioners, learners or employers. Fairclouch (1989 also uses the concept of discourse to describe accepted ways of using language and argues that such discourses are underpinned by certain ideologies that are shaped by power relations in social institutions and society as a whole. Furthermore, Fairclough (1989).argues, these discourses have an impact upon social structures as well as being determined by them. Foucalt (1972) is also concerned with how powerful ideologies operate to construct knowledge or versions of truth. Habermas coined the 'communicative action' to describe discursive practices that can be transformative if they are practised reflexively, with a sense of goodwill and community (Young 1990). Each of these critical theoretical positions are valuable tools for analysing the case developed in this paper and identifying opportunities for effecting better practice in the field of ALBE and ESL. The concept of discourse is used to draw attention to the process by which certain ideas and values are adopted by a group and are accepted as the truth, or common sense.

3.3 Telephone survey

A questionnaire was devised to establish the need for the case (Appendix 2). It asked if providers had learners with ESL needs in ALBE classes. A total of ten telephone surveys were conducted in TAFE, workplace and community settings. The survey essentially sought to confirm that learners with ESL needs were placed in ALBE classes. It was also used as a process of identifying providers who were interested in exploring the issue in a focus group or interview.

3.4 Focus groups

The focus groups were intended to involve literacy practitioners who were working in the three different settings – community sector, larger institution and workplace – in a directed discussion around 10 predetermined questions (Appendix 1) which were designed to lead teachers towards addressing the key research questions 1-4 (section 2). The method employed was based on the work of Hurworth (1996), who maintains that focus group methodology has become increasingly popular in the social sciences because it is cost- and time-efficient, has the advantage of increasing sample size, provides checks and balances, and tends to be highly enjoyable to participants. The focus group methodology also has potential as a professional development activity, enabling participants to critically reflect on classroom practice. Two focus groups were conducted, one in the community setting and the other in a large institution. The workplace setting was addressed bv four individual interviews with practitioners who had worked in different workplace contexts, as it was difficult to get a group together due to their work constraints.

3.5 Interviews

After the initial focus groups it was decided to follow up some of the issue raised with more in-depth interviews with practitioners who had not been involved in the focus

groups. The workplace focus group was abandoned in favour of individual interviews, as it became clear that each workplace setting is defined according to the needs of a particular industry group or individual company. Individual interviews provided the opportunity to pursue those particularities in greater depth.

A total of eight individual interviews were conducted, four with practitioners who worked in industry settings, two with people who worked primarily in community settings and two with people who had worked in larger institutions and who had made significant contributions to the discourses within the field.

3.6 Reflexive research

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this kind of research given the many different theoretical positions that inform the intersection of language and literacy pedagogy. Usher (1996) presents a powerful critique of positivist/empiricist traditions of research that claim scientific objectivity and neutrality in the social sciences. Drawing on the traditions of critical theory he constructs an argument for reflexive educational research that has as its primary purpose the effecting of change in some respect, be it attitudinal or structural. Research that is truth questioning and is based on critical analysis of knowledge is always dependant on "socially, culturally historically-located practices and contexts, unacknowledged values, tacit discourses and interpretative traditions" (Usher 1996:32).

Research, Usher argues, is therefore also partly auto-biographical, as the researcher is never objectively detached from the research. This suggests that is important for the researcher to declare their own interests in the analysis of any case. The researcher and author of this report on the ALBE and ESL interface is a practitioner who works within the field of ALBE and a postgraduate student of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL). As a program manager and a reflective practitioner who uses spoken and written texts to engage discursively with the field, the researcher has invariably drawn on this experience in defining and analysing the case.

Given concerns within the respective fields of ALBE and ESL, that those in power, do not value the integrity of language and literacy as specialized and professional fields (Lo Bianco 1998; McKay 1998a; McKay1998 b; Williams 1998; ACAL 2001) the research has a political as well as pedagogical purpose. The research has the explicit purpose of developing a critical discursive narrative of the complex and diverse but interconnected discourses that converge at the interface between ALBE and ESL. These discourses are shaped by the experience of teaching, learning and reflexive practice. Practitioner theorizing on the differences and similarities of ALBE and ESL and the pedagogical implications of combining learners with ESL needs with ESB learners in ALBE settings is therefore the major focus of this case. The researcher therefore draws on a body of theoretical literature, personal experience and dialogue with other practitioners in defining and analysing this case. As an ALBE practitioner who is also a postgraduate student of TESOL, the researcher has had to struggle with issues of identification with the different and sometimes competing interests of the two fields of ALBE and ESL. This can be seen as both a strength, and a limitation in this paper.

4. Definitions

In identifying the case it is important to clarify the use of words such as 'literacy', 'language', 'ESL' and 'ALBE' as the definition of each is influenced by pedagogical and political factors (Davison et al.1993; Hammond et al.1992). The following discussion will attempt to exemplify some of these pedagogical and political factors in the definition of these terms as they will be used in this paper. The term ESL Literacy will also be discussed in some detail as an accurate definition of this term is crucial to developing a way of talking about the intersection of ALBE and ESL.

4.1 ESL and LBOTE

The term ESL is problematic since learners of English from different ethnic backgrounds may speak more than one language, and English may in fact be a third or fourth language. However for the purposes of this paper, the term ESL will be used in the absence of a more accurate and widely accepted acronym to describe this field in general and the specific linguistic needs of students, that is. ESL needs. Similarly, the terms NESB (Non-English Speaking Background) or LOTE (Language Other Than English) background are often used interchangeably, but have, according to Hammomd et al.(1992) and Davison et al.(1993), quite different meanings in a political sense. The former suggests a deficit model, while the latter is more culturally inclusive and therefore more politically powerful. Ozolins (1993) argues that language has always been a political issue throughout Australia's history with the successive waves of migration that have shaped Australian society. Increasingly the term LBOTE student, denoting Language background other than English, is used, which reflects awareness of how language shapes attitudes within the society. This paper will adopt LBOTE as the term to describe people with language backgrounds other than English. It is important to note, however, that not all LBOTE learners have English language needs. This is particularly true of those with language backgrounds other than English who were born here or came at a young age, and have developed native speaker proficiency in English

These definitional issues arise primarily from a concern to acknowledge and accommodate different learner profiles in a culturally inclusive manner. There are however other pressures, particularly perceived threats to the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP), that the wording of such definitions is vitally important. The eligibility criteria for the Commonwealth Government funded On-Arrivals program, for example, has changed significantly in that eligibility to receive free English classes is linked to length of residence rather than actual need for ESL support. New arrivals, if they qualify, are eligible for 510 hours of English classes, a time frame which was arrived at, not on pedagogical grounds or learner needs, but rather to satisfy changes in government policy and funding formulas. Once the 510 hours are completed exit students are able to participate in the 'open market' ESL programs on offer, some of which are in fact ALBE programs, hence the renewed interest in the ALBE and ESL interface (See ARIS 2001; Chalk and Wilson 2001; Faine 2001; Manwarring 2001). Hammond et al. (1992) noted that ESL programs were not exclusively delivered through the AMEP and that ESL also occurred in TAFE colleges and a range of community providers.

The role of the AMEP has changed significantly over the past decade and this has caused some to argue that the very concept of ESL is in fact under threat due to

changes in government policy. Helen Moore (2001) charts the decline of the AMEP in a chapter entitled 'Although it wasn't broken, it certainly was fixed' where she clearly identifies the 'culprit' of the 'fix' as the dominant ideology of economic rationalism. Whilst there is much evidence to support her argument, the issue of how language and literacy are defined has perhaps played a more significant part in shaping government policy.

4.2 Language and literacy

Definitions of language and literacy have become the subject of much political debate, thereby adding complexity to the task of establishing clear parameters for pedagogy and provision within the field of ALBE and ESL. Ask the average person in the street what being literate means and they might answer "being able to read and write" and then ask that same person "what is language?" and they might reply "Oh well different languages like English or Greek or German". Whilst there are clearly problems with such simple definitions this obvious difference between language and literacy appears to have been obfuscated by the very sophisticated linguistic and philosophical 'what is literacy' (Gee 1987) arguments over the past decade.

Nicholas (1992) and others (Lo Bianco 1998; McKay 1998; Williams1998; Moore 2001) argue that the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (DEET 1991: 9) effectively collapsed language into literacy and thereby failed to adequately address the needs of those for whom English is not their first language. The reasons for this conflation in policy terms are complex and are addressed quite extensively in the book *Australian Policy Activism in Language and Literacy* (Lo Bianco and Wickert 2001). The causes are both pedagogical and political. In part, however, it can be argued that the conflation has arisen because definitions of literacy within the field have been broadened to include the use of appropriate language for different contexts, oral communication, critical thinking skills and cultural knowledge. This has made the definition of literacy a rather tricky and slippery concept (Maushart 1991).

The Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL), for example, defines literacy thus:

> Literacy involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking; it incorporates numeracy. It includes the cultural knowledge that enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different social situations. For an advanced technological society such as Australia, the goal is an active literacy that allows people to use language to enhance their capacity to think, create and question, in order to participate effectively in society.
>
> (Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training 1991:90)

The inclusion of listening, speaking, critical thinking and cultural knowledge in definitions of literacy, reflects not only the impact of technological change on methods of communication, but also deeper understandings about how literacy is acquired and developed within a culturally diverse society. Being able to read and write, even the simplest texts, requires the integration of a range of processes. The inclusion of numeracy skills within definitions of literacy further complicates understandings of what it means to be literate in the information age. Literacy is a social, cultural and economic practice, but it is also a practice where language is used to communicate ideas, which therefore necessitates sophisticated understandings of how language functions in both written and spoken forms. This definition of literacy clearly cuts

across the traditional domain of ESL, which has tended to emphasize the development of spoken language although has also addressed the development of written language.

These definitional shifts are not occurring just in Australia. Globalisation has impacted on language and literacy policy on an international level as well. The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was an attempt by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to measure adult litracy levels in twenty member countries (OECD 2000). The report *Literacy for the Information Age* proposed that to be functionally literate in the 21st century one must have:

> The ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community – to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.
>
> (OECD 2000:10)

The figures revealed a causal relationship between levels of literacy and the economic performance of a country, suggesting that higher levels of literacy contribute to greater economic wellbeing (OECD 2000). These assertions have been widely criticised (Hamilton and Barton 2000), nevertheless the UK government has launched a national literacy strategy to secure its place in a global economy, viewing literacy skills as fundamental to rebuilding the economy (Moser 1999). Definitions of literacy are continually changing as new literacies emerge (Graff 1987) but changing economic and political discourses also impact on those definitions. There are some, however, who argue that there is little evidence to support the view that illiteracy is the cause of economic downturns or even the cure, and suggest that other factors, namely economic restructuring, globalisation and government responses to that phenomena, play a more significant role (Luke 1992; Black 2002).

The growth of new technologies has also, in part, contributed to renewed interest in literacy competence. It is argued that new technologies require different ways of thinking, problem posing and solving, different organisational practices and processes, and new ways of communicating meaning through text, image and sound (Leu 2001). They require new, higher order processes and increased levels of competence within existing approaches. Some even argue that the information processing skills required in the information age will transform notions of what it means to be literate (Lepani 1998). However, the question of who will be required to use those higher order skills in the workplace, family and community, and who will have access to those new technologies, is a matter of contention.

Literacy is increasingly used as an overarching concept to include spoken language, reading and writing, numeracy, diagramatic literacy, visual/graphic literacy, conceptual literacy and so on. In short, it means the information processing skills that are necessary for gaining meaning from a range of multimedia text formats and engaging with different bodies of knowledge; hence the use of terms such as computer literacy, visual literacy, political literacy, cultural literacy and economic literacy. The politicisation of literacy has however created an environment where, "literacy means whatever the culture at large wants it to mean, no more and no less" (Maushart 1991: 20).

Nevertheless these re-definitions of literacy also point to the fact that literacy is more than a set of information processing competencies that can be defined and acquired in a neatly prescribed fashion. Literacy is a social practice that evolves and develops in a

diversity of social and cultural settings. Definitions of literacy therefore change as the social, economic, political, cultural and technological circumstances, change. The concept of multiliteracies takes this idea further, because it acknowledges literacy as a practice that involves the negotiation of cultural and linguistic differences. The work of Barton and Hamilton (1998) explores literacy in a range of different social settings and points to effective practical approaches to literacy which would not necessarily meet the kinds of benchmarks used for literacy in this country. Vernacular literacies, Hamilton argues, are in fact more robust and sustainable in the life of the individual and provide the basis for lifelong learning (Hamilton, 2000).

Multiliteracies are inclusive of cultural diversity, but language diversity is also an important issue given the globalisation of communications (Cope and Kalantsis 1997). It is only a short step from this argument to suggest that globalisation will result in many different kinds of Englishes and that 'standard English', which is a problematic concept in itself, is no longer relevant (Kachru 1992). It is not surprising therefore that language and literacy have been amalgamated in policy terms when such sophisticated definitions of literacy are promoted. According to the definitions cited above, literacy includes language proficiency.

Baynham (1991), however, challenged this assumption by suggesting that it is language which contains literacy, and it is language that serves communication, rather than literacy. Williams (1998) suggests the concept of literacy has gained ascendancy at the expense of language proficiency and ample evidence exists to support his analysis. Lo Bianco and Freebody (2001) argue that the conjunction of economic globalisation, sophisticated communication technologies and national and global cultural diversity make more complex literacy capability a necessity in one's personal, civic and working life. Further, they argue, literacy as a key capability is essential to understanding social change and its implications for the social, political and cultural life of a robust participatory democracy. Williams (1998) and others (Lo Bianco 1998, McKay 1998)) argue that the consequences of this policy shift towards promoting increased attention to literacy is that the special needs of LBOTE students have been glossed over. This issue will be taken up further in the analysis of the data from the ALBE field.

4.3 Adult literacy and ALBE

Within the ALBE field the terms adult literacy and ALBE are often used interchangeably. ALBE incorporates numeracy and general education while the term 'adult literacy' carries with it understandings about the adult learner's background and experience. It is not just literacy, even according to the broadest definition; it is literacy for adults who have, for whatever reason, not developed their literacy ability. Whilst it is not intended, the very label adult literacy signifies a failure to have developed literacy at school. Often, adult literacy students have missed out on a basic education either because of their difficulties with literacy or for a variety of sociocultural factors (Wickert 1989; Bourdieu 1983). McCormack (1992) argued that what most adult literacy students need is not so much literacy but rather an education. What this means is that literacy is both the vehicle for and the outcome of becoming educated. The underlying philosophy of the ALBE sector then is to give adults, who have missed out on an education for whatever reason, a second chance at learning. Cognitive factors or behavioural problems alone do not account for school failure. The concept of ALBE therefore acknowledges the large body of literature that explores the

socio-cultural and economic factors that effectively exclude some people from gaining an education in mainstream schooling (Bourdieu 1973; Willis 1976; Harris 1982).

Bourdieu (1973) referred to the 'cultural capital' – the values, behaviour and social skills – that are required to effectively participate in mainstream schooling and argued that many working-class students are disadvantaged in this respect because of the hegemony of the dominant class in mainstream schooling. Willis (1976) argued that working class students actively resist the values of the dominant class and therefore education, seriously disadvantaging their opportunities to enjoy the economic and cultural benefits that higher levels of education bring. Australian society is made up of different cultural groups for whom English is a first language but who find the dominant cultural paradigms alien to their lived culture. Their resistance to that culture may be either active or passive (Connell et al.1982). Some of these people fail in the school system and end up in adult literacy classrooms and ALBE programs. The ALBE field has a tradition of education as emancipation and draws on Freire's notion of 'conscientizao' (knowledge and awareness) and literacy as a political act (Freire 1976).

Just as there is a deficit implied in the term NESB, there is a deficit implied in the word 'basic'. The term general education, which encompasses the generic skills necessary for ongoing learning, is now used more widely. Defining ALBE is also therefore a tricky process because it is often used as an overarching term to describe literacy, numeracy and general education programs that meet the needs of a diverse range of groups. Adult literacy is a subset of the broader concept of ALBE. The issue of what knowledge or content should be included in ALBE programs has not been defined. Knowledge of the world and ethnically inclusive curriculum, have been defined as important elements by Davison et al. (1993), but the question of whose knowledge and for what purpose must also to be addressed.

4.4 ESL literacy

ESL literacy is a term which has been used to describe literacy programs for people who are LBOTE learners who are perceived as having a reasonably functional, but not necessarily standard, level of spoken English but who have not acquired English literacy. This 'working' definition however belies the complexities of learners who might potentially fit into this category.

As mentioned earlier, length of residence in Australia is increasingly being used as the determinant of whether a person whose first language is not English is considered to require ESL support. The assumption behind this is that length of residence automatically leads to a degree of acculturation and hence language proficiency. This is not necessarily the case according to Schumann (1975, 1976) as there are a range of different affective criteria that might impact on a person's assimilation into a foreign culture. In Australia, the policy of multiculturalism challenges notions of cultural assimilation and therefore a monolingual society. ESL literacy can also therefore encompass notions of multilingualism (Rado and Cruz 1994). The ESL literacy definition is often applied to long-term residents of this country who were not born in Australia and who have a language background other than English, but it can also apply to their offspring or to the indigenous people of this country. Children who grow up in households where other languages are spoken may not acquire native speaker proficiency of English even if they complete their schooling in this country. Non-

standard forms of spoken English are not however exclusive to people who have different ethnic background as the work of Labov (1972a, 1972b); Bersnstein (1971/1972/1975) and Heath (1990), have demonstrated. Davison et al. (1993) nevertheless conclude that ESB learners have greater familiarity at least with different registers of the English language even if they may not be able to reproduce those forms.

Despite the many theories which exist that might help to understand the needs of such learners, the discourses which surround this area are invariably unsatisfactory, hence the metaphor of greyness. Definitions of ESL literacy must take account of not only languages other than English but also the non-standard variations of English.

The above attempts to define terms such as ALBE and ESL, language and literacy, LBOTE and ESL literacy, demonstrates that there are significant overlaps but also critical differences between the two fields. Each has different traditions and methodologies, but increasingly these are being regarded as cultural and political rather than pedagogical. In recent years the two fields have become closer in their pedagogical approach drawing on the work of systemic functional linguistics incorporating theories of critical literacy and the genre approach to spoken and written texts (Davison et al). The similarities between the needs of both learner groups, and the complexity of variables impacting on first and second language acquisition, have further blurred the boundaries between ALBE and ESL learners.

4.5 ESB and LBOTE learners

4.5.1 Learner variables

The factors that influence a person's ability to gain proficiency in language and literacy are explored extensively in the literature on second language acquisition. The classification of learner variables offered by Yorio (1976) is widely referred to. According to Yorio's classification, factors which impact on learning include: age, cognition, native language structure and style, the context of learning, sociocultural factors, motivation, health, educational background and aptitude towards learning, amongst others (Yorio 1976). Each of these is broken down into specific elements (see Appendix 4). If one were to attempt to describe any one learner, that is, any one human being, by commenting on each of these variables even briefly, one might still not be able to say with any accuracy what that person's performance in any given learning situation might be. Despite the wealth of research on language acquisition, "we are still a very long way from being able to predict, with any reliability, how successfully a specific individual will learn" (Littlewood 1984: 67).

Furthermore, different conceptions of how proficiency is defined are strongly influenced by the social context of the language required. As Fairclough (1989) demonstrates, language can be used to exert power over those who do not have access to the dominant discourse. Who defines competence, for what purpose and in what context are therefore significant questions for a critical analysis of the factors that might influence language and literacy acquisition

Davison et al. (1993) categorize the many variables that impact on the needs of the learner under four broad headings, which are summarised as follows:

Sociocultural profile

sociocultural background

familiarity with dominant culture

attitudes to dominant culture and own culture

Educational profile

level of formal education

learning how to learn skills and strategies

attitudes to education

self esteem

Linguistic profile

different languages learnt

age learnt

learnt formally or informally

familiarity with standard written English

awareness of other non-standard language varieties

Literacy profile

experience of literacy

literate but non-readers

attitudes to literacy (own and host culture's)

literacy practices

(Davison et al. 1993)

4.5.2 Difference and diversity

Any attempt to define the similarities and differences between ESB and LBOTE learners is fraught with complexity. The above guide goes some of the way in providing a framework for describing the profile of individual learners. Each of the variables listed can equally be applied to ESB and LBOTE learners, and each provides the teacher with an understanding of how these different variables might impact on the learner in any given learning context. What applies to one individual with a particular socio-cultural, educational, linguistic and literate background may not however apply to another from a very similar background. Individual and personal factors also play an important part in the equation. The socio-cultural profile of a LBOTE student may be different to that of an ESB student, but one cannot assume that people from similar backgrounds will behave or learn in a similar way or that people from quite different backgrounds might not learn well together in different contexts.

Hammond et al. (1992) similarly attempt to describe the similarities and differences between ESB and LBOTE learners and conclude that the key similarity between both ALBE and ESL learners is that they are adults. The implication of this is that adults have different motivations for learning and bring life experiences to the classroom that can be utilized in the learning process. Knowles (1978) maintains that previous learning experience impacts significantly on the adult learner's motivation to learn. Negative experiences of learning and negative attitudes towards learning are oft cited as significant barriers for ALBE students. The same can be argued for LBOTE students with limited or negative experiences of schooling. Schumann (1975) regards

culture shock, social distance and homesickness to be significant affective factors in the acquisition of a second language. However ESB learners can also face similar feelings of isolation and alienation from the dominant culture. It has also been argued that the reason for wanting a high degree of proficiency will significantly influence the degree of motivation and commitment to the learning process (Gillhorta and Callender 1985; Gardner, R.C. & Lambert, W.E. 1972). The social context and the purpose of learning is therefore of paramount importance.

Cognitive factors and different learning styles are also a significant issue for many students. Cultural factors moreover play a part in the cognitive aspects of learning. For example Kaplan (1966 and 1987) explores the notion of rhetorical style in language and concludes that different languages have certain clear preferences in rhetorical style, some of which may be quite different to the rhetorical preferences of the English language. His initial analysis was however rather too deterministic, as learners adopt a range of styles in different contexts, but his observations did highlight the need to look at how cultural differences might impact on all aspects of the learning process of LBOTE students. The rhetorical style of English texts, however, can be inaccessible or alien to ESB learners with limited education. The genre approach to developing knowledge of text is therefore appropriate for both ESB and LBOTE learners (Bayham 1997). The social distance that each group, and in fact any given individual, might feel towards the dominant culture and its texts is however based on quite different experiences and this must be taken into consideration.

Coleman and Schiffman (1993) attempt to define the similarities and differences between ESL literacy learners and adult literacy learners. Their profile of the ESL literacy learner, however, does not include people who were born in this country but may still have ESL needs. Rather they focus on LBOTE learners who may have had limited or negative schooling in their own country. The chart of learner variables (see Appendix 5) demonstrates an attempt to compare the variables impacting on both learners including educational background, employment history, self-esteem, other affective factors and other cognitive factors (Coleman and Schiffman 1993). This effort is, however, another example of how difficult it is to define the wide variety of learner experiences and backgrounds. Generalisations are invariably too simplistic, and exceptions to the definition inevitable, hence again the metaphor of greyness.

Making any generalisations about specific groups of learners, based on classifications using variable criteria is therefore a complex process. Whilst homogenous grouping of students is often regarded as the most desirable and effective approach in terms of classroom management, the content, context and purpose of the learning are also significant variables. There are clearly many other pedagogical and practical issues that come into play when devising appropriate programs to meet different learner needs. Teachers, program managers and assessors make these judgements every time they devise a new program or place a learner in a specific classroom. Certain generalisations have to be made.

The general consensus in the literature appears to be that LBOTE learners with high levels of education in their native language have very different learning needs from ESB learners with limited education and low levels of literacy (Hammond et al. 1992; Davison et al. 1993). Nevertheless, these learners are sometimes placed in the same class, for a whole range of reasons. Similarly, whilst it is generally considered to be undesirable to have newly arrived migrants with low levels of language proficiency in

the same class as low level ESB literacy students, there are some contexts where this occurs. Language and literacy provision occurs in a range of contexts for a variety of purposes. In an ideal world there would be adequate resources to devise programs that accommodate the needs of each individual learner. Practitioners, however, must learn to negotiate these complex variables in the context of many different competing ends and limited resources.

5. Teacher competence and qualifications

The competence of teachers is therefore also a critical variable in any discussion on the interface between ALBE and ESL. How well do teachers, program managers, assessors and practitioners in general understand the complexities of the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds? And what formal qualifications should teachers of learners with such diverse backgrounds have? ALBE teachers must be able to accommodate the learning needs of adults who have low levels of literacy and who may also have limited general education or specific learning difficulties. General education implies a broad general knowledge and multiple disciplines. If such teachers are also to meet the needs of learners who may have ESL needs, the issue of teacher competence and qualifications becomes even more problematic. The question of what makes a competent ALBE teacher was addressed by Scheeres et al. (1993) who provide the following elements as criteria for a competent ALBE teacher. The following is a summary of their tables:

- knowledge of adult learning and teaching approaches and practices
- selection and placement of students
- management of learning situations
- monitoring learning
- evaluation of programs
- community communication and consultation
- professional development and training.

(See Scheeres et al.1993: 24-30)

Embedded in these broad competencies is comprehensive knowledge of the theories that contribute to best practice, which includes theories of learning in general and adult learning principles in particular. The selection and placement of students implies developed literacy and numeracy diagnostic skills, while management of learning situations includes both curriculum planning and development and classroom management skills. It is important to stress that these competencies were arrived at after extensive consultation within the field, so they are not externally determined (Scheeres et al. 1993). They are however idealistic in their breadth and scope given the industrial conditions of the adult education workforce. Nevertheless, these benchmark competencies reflect the growing professionalism of the ALBE field across Australia over the past decade. In Victoria, the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA) was introduced to both provide teachers with a framework for naming their practice and to broaden the scope of the curriculum. It was argued that the field needed a common language to talk about learner needs and how literacy development might be measured. The implementation of the certificate required

teachers to participate in professional development activities which have served to make the field more professional in its approach (Sanguinetti 1994). Angwin(2001), McGuirk (2001) and Riddell (2001), provide evidence of increased levels of participation in professional development and formal postgraduate studies in the past decade. McGuirk suggests that much of the field-based professional development is however practically oriented in terms of information sessions, rather than developmental in terms of teaching practice.

What is absent in the competencies generally cited for ALBE teachers, however, is knowledge and understanding of theories of language acquisition, that is, theories that draw from the study of linguistics. Davison et al. (1993) argue that the professional development of ALBE teachers should include knowledge of linguistics, particularly in relation to language functions and the process of language acquisition.

Despite the growth of postgraduate courses in the past decade and increased levels of participation in such programs in the period 1994 - 97 (Riddell 2001), the issue of the qualifications required to be a competent ALBE teacher is still unresolved. McGuirk's figures indicate an increase in the level of formal qualifications attained by teachers across Australia, yet the majority of participants in that survey were unable to clearly identify theoretical positions that informed their practice. Furthermore, participant responses indicated overwhelming endorsement of the application of best practice criteria (McGuirk 2001, see Appendix 3 for best practice criteria applied), many of which require a sound theoretical base. This paradox can in part be explained by the discourses that inform practice within the field of adult education and ALBE and ESL in particular.

Discourses of theory, policy, politics, institutional practice, cultural difference and learner needs are all embodied within practitioner discourses. The data from the field, in this research, seeks to illustrate the richness of these discourses and describe how practitioners negotiate these complexities in their work. Formal qualifications and explicit articulated theoretical positions are not the only measure of teacher competence. What teachers learn through the process of their practice, and how they talk about that practice, is also vitally important. How is the identity of the adult literacy teacher constructed, and how do teachers accommodate the needs of diverse learners within the constraints of everyday practice?

6. Practitioner discourses and the ALBE/ESL interface

As mentioned in the methodology section, practitioner views were sought from a variety of settings to reflect the different contexts of program delivery. The focus groups, interviews, telephone surveys and a selection of articles written by the participating practitioners were used to develop this section on practitioner discourses. The focus groups and the interviews were framed by the questions outlined in Appendix 1 while the telephone interviews were based on the questionnaire (Appendix 2).

Practitioner discourses emerge in response to the lived experience of being an educator and engaging in reflective dialogue with other practitioners, where the language of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and behaving, interacts to form a particular consciousness or identity. It forms, as Lingus (1994) describes, a community consciousness and a sense of the common purpose. This contributes to

what Habermas (in Young 1990) calls 'communicative action'. The following critical synthesis of the ideas of practitioners, who work in different settings, does however have limitations on a number of levels. The views of any single practitioner are not represented in their entirety, that is, in the context of what else was said. To accurately represent the many discussions that took place would require a much larger study. All research methods are however limited in some way and essentially shaped by the subjectivities of the researcher (Usher 1996). The questions asked and the feedback offered by the interviewer, shape the direction of the responses, as do the responses of other participants in the case of focus groups. This is the nature of dialogue; it is subject to the irregularities and subjectivities of everyday communication. We are dealing with human interaction, which is therefore subject to the idiosyncrasies of human behavior.

Just as there many different learner groups and a complex range of variables impacting on learner attitudes and performance, there is also a wide variation in the educational and cultural backgrounds of practitioners, which means that they too will have different values, approaches and perspectives.

6.1 Teacher identity

Teachers working in the ALBE field have a range of qualifications and background experience in teaching and education in general. As McGuirk suggests, the profession is an ageing one, and teachers have extensive experiences that span the primary, secondary and TAFE sectors (McGuirk 2001). The question of identity was therefore posed in terms of whether teachers saw themselves more as adult literacy teachers or adult ESL teachers, in order to establish in which community or 'tribe' they felt they belonged.

The teachers responded to this question by firstly stating their qualification and then their teaching experience. The teachers who identified themselves as primarily literacy teachers qualified this comment with descriptions of their educational philosophy, which included adult learning principles, cultural inclusiveness and general education. A number of teachers made the point of identifying their commitment to adult literacy as being one of emancipation of the learner. The ESL-trained teachers identified themselves as being both adult literacy teachers and ESL teachers. All the teachers identified themselves as teachers of adults.

One repondent replied:

> When I'm with my ESL class I feel like an ESL teacher and when I'm with my ALBE class I feel like an adult literacy teacher. I'm very aware when I'm teaching a literacy class and there is an ESL student. I'm tussling between whether I should be a literacy teacher or an ESL teacher because I do see them as different methodologies (K1).

Another teacher responded:

> Yes, I see myself as both. I am qualified to teach both. But I see myself as bigger than that as I've taught in a lot of different places, in workplaces and so forth which have a different focus.I draw on all these skills in my teaching. Primarily I'm literacy and ESL but in different contexts I draw on a broader field of knowledge and skills (K2).

And yet another dual qualified teacher responded:

> I love the stretch between ESL and adult literacy (C1).

A number of teachers referred to the broader field of knowledge and skills that they brought to the ALBE task. Knowledge of the world was a recurring theme. One teacher from a community setting saw new technologies as an added dimension to his work. The issue of context was very important to the teachers. Their identity at the time of the interview was based very much on the particular classes they were teaching at that time. This was also true of teachers working in workplace settings.

The practitioners working in workplace settings invariably described themselves as more than just adult literacy or ESL teachers. This was so, in part, because they were required to meet other training objectives, namely the competencies of various training packages, but also, in part, because of the institutional demands of particular industries and specific workplaces that required different kinds of skills. Meeting the demands of the workplace often meant developing an understanding of workplace practices and the hierachical organization of communication processes. However, as one contributor stated:

> You can't remove the consciousness of the language and literacy issue when operating in the workplace. My work is deeply embedded in all the literacy traditions... I see my self as a subversive agent in the workplace (W1).

Each of the participating practitioners responded to this question by talking about their philosophy of learning and relationship to the ALBE field. Each recognised that identity was a crucial element in their role in the learning process and the way in which they approached the task of teaching and facilitating, program design and institutional practice.

Underlying much of the discussion on teacher identity was a shared understanding of what it means to be an ALBE teacher as opposed to an ESL teacher. Whilst qualifications featured in the responses, it was depth and range of experience within the field that seemed to mark the participants self-perceptions. The word 'the field' seemed to denote a sense of community. Whilst this is a subjective perception, there appeared to be unarticulated assumptions of shared experience and understandings that were transmitted in these discussions. It is this sense of identification with a community of others, who share a collective awareness, which underpins practitioner discourses. Implicit in this shared understanding was knowledge of learner needs.

6.2 ALBE and ESL learner profiles

The participants were asked to define the difference between an ALBE learner and an ESL learner. Suprisingly, none of the practitioners volunteered a definitive statement such as "ESB background with low literacy and education" for an ALBE student and "LBOTE with English language and literacy needs" for an ESL learner. All of the participants saw the issue as problematical and sought immediately to introduce the complex range of variables in determining a learner profile and therefore the type of learning program appropriate. The discussions revolved around the learner variables exemplified by Davison et al's (1993) classification. The practitioners illustrated their knowledge by describing the profiles of students they had taught.

The general consensus that emerged was that LBOTE learners who had limited oral language proficiency required specific language classes, although it was acknowledged that within this group there was also a complex range of variables.

Learners from different cultural backgrounds and countries were identified as having different learning needs both linguistically and culturally. For example Vietnamese learners were considered to have different linguistic issues to Somali learners or people from Spanish speaking backgrounds or Eastern European backgrounds. Participants who had ESL qualifications were more confident in discussing these issues, however most participants were able to acknowledge that the native culture of the learners meant that they generally had different learning styles and linguistic needs. The profiles they presented of individual learners demonstrated knowledge of the complexity of variables as the following example demonstrates.

> I had this young Russian male, who was an engineer and had served in the army. He had very clear ideas about how he wanted to learn English, and he was quite bored in the ESL class. He wanted more stimulating material even though his language proficiency was about ASLPR 1+ (Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating) across the board. He was prepared to keep working independently on the grammar he wanted to learn. I thought he might benefit from the discussion in the ALBE class on issues that he was more interested in. He would be exposed to the broad vocabulary, cultural issues and have the opportunity to listen and speak at a higher level. It wasn't ideal but I placed him in a level 3 CGEA class with a group of LBOTE women who were mostly long-term residents. It was a complete disaster because he didn't relate to the ALBE teaching style although he didn't mind the female attention. The same thing has worked with other people of similar backgrounds but not this particular male. Personality has a lot to do with it as well (C4).

Level of education was considered to be a complex variable by all participants. People from LBOTE backgrounds who were highly educated were considered to have different language learning needs to those who had limited education or limited literacy in their first language. This led some to conclude that learner variables for LBOTE learners were more diverse and variable than for ALBE learners, but this conclusion was not shared by all respondents.

One teacher from a workplace setting, who was qualified to teach both ESL and Literacy and who felt she had more ESL than ALBE competence, contradicted this notion by suggesting that in fact ALBE learners had more complex needs than many of the ESL learners she had taught. She supported this by listing personal, cultural and cognitive factors.

> I think ESL is easy as compared with literacy. With literacy students there's an expectation that they should already know the language and know how to read and write. This realisation creates a learning block. They think they can't do it because they didn't. This is particularly true in the workplace where you might have both groups together. The ESL learner has an excuse for not knowing the language but the native speaker doesn't. The range of ALBE students is hard to deal with because they might have multiple issues, like physical disability, intellectual, learning difficulties, trauma, low education, NESB background, psychiatric. I think it's much harder to meet the individual needs of those students (W2).

The teacher is really talking about successfully meeting the needs of a diverse ALBE group rather than the complexity of variables for any given learner. The LBOTE learner may have more complex variables to accommodate but the ALBE students' lack of confidence was seen to be a more difficult issue to address. This example highlights the challenge of the ALBE task in general.

In discussing the learning needs of people from ESB backgrounds, a range of learner profiles was canvassed. The notion of the ALBE learner as having limited education, negative experiences of schooling and a lack of general knowledge was generally the starting point for defining learner needs. Some teachers felt protective of their students and were concerned to not make the students feel inadequate. The literacy class was seen as a safe place for them to develop skills in 'reading the world'. The inclusion of LBOTE learners, who had a achieved a high level of education in their own country, was seen as a threat to the non-threatening environment that ALBE teachers sought to create. The teachers were suggesting that ALBE students needed to develop more knowledge and conceptual understanding in order to read and write better. However even these generalizations were contradicted by one of the participants:

> I always struggle with this notion of literacy being about conceptual grasp of the world. It suggests that university-educated people are much more aware of the world. Literacy students might come in self-defining 'I want spelling'. We know it's more than that. But we can make the literacy learner child-like if we then define them that way. Literacy learners understand more texts than we think... spoken texts... political texts (C1).

The teachers' perception of the students, as well as the teachers' values and beliefs, or ideology, highlight another complexity in the definition of learner profiles. Whose judgements and standards are most highly valued – whose English and whose knowledge? Here the teacher is attempting to deconstruct the power relationship in the judgements teachers make and the impact it has on pedagogical practice. Most of the participants generally felt very uncomfortable with the notion of defining the 'classic' ALBE student or the 'classic' ESL student because they were aware of the dangers of over-generalising about either group.

> So there's not one sort of ESL literacy student, just as there isn't one sort of ALBE student. The key thing is that the student can participate in class and that that's what they want to be doing (ID).

A number of participants therefore felt that the definition of learner variables was a very grey area with many different shades of grey. This was particularly so when trying to define the 'classic' ESL literacy learner.

6.3 ESL literacy learners

The most common accepted definition of the classic ESL literacy learner was encapsulated in this comment from one participant

> We had a lot of ESL literacy students who had high oracy in English because they were long term residents but still had low literacy in English. They identified very strongly with Australian society. They saw themselves as Australians and would be insulted to be put into a class with people who didn't speak or understand English (ID).

Within this group however there was seen to be enormous diversity in terms of the country of origin and level of education. Many of these students, participants argued, may still have what some might consider specific ESL needs, irrespective of their fluency, knowledge of the culture and breadth of vocabulary, as they speak a non-standard form of English, which led to the following exchange in one of the focus groups:

> Why don't we see the English that long-term Italian migrants speak as a kind of creole (C1).
>
> If everyone in the Italian community is making the same mistake then it's a language of its own. But who is going to go and learn Italian English. It's got no social power (C2).

The issue of non-standard English was a key point in the discussions on ESL literacy learners in both focus groups and several interviews. The teachers demonstrated an understanding of the complex interrelationships between language and culture and how non-standard forms of English develop within different cultural groups. These non-standard forms were seen to be the product of cultural and linguistic factors. Some of the teachers had studied linguistics in their postgraduate courses and valued the knowledge they had gained in how language is acquired and transformed. This knowledge combined with an understanding of how language is used as an instrument of power provided practitioners with a means of critically deconstructing the assumptions underpinning their own practice and how those assumptions might be at odds with the learners' identity and aspirations.

Practitioners appeared to be aware that their values and ideological position was often at odds with the culture of the students. One of the teachers, who was working with a mixed group of ESB and LBOTE young people from the northern suburbs in a community program, acknowledged that the values held by young people are very different to those of their teachers.

> Some of these kids have a very small socioeconomic world and therefore so is their cultural world. For example I had a conversation with this fifteen year old boy, who couldn't conceive of a woman not having kids until she was thirty. It was completely outside of his experience. They become locked into their own cultural world (C4).

Age, cultural experience and geographical location intersect here to create a very particular learning situation for both the teacher and the learner. Whilst some of the students in this teacher's youth program may have had ESL needs, they were reluctant to be identified as such because other cultural factors carried greater weight, that is, identification with a youth culture, and a youth culture that was very particular to this part of Melbourne. The existence of different sub cultures within Australian society is a factor that was acknowledged by most participants. Each individual has their own identity, their own self-defined learner profile. This is the issue that the majority of participants felt was of critical importance, that is, learner identity.

6.4 Learner identity

The level of motivation a student has for the task of improving their language or literacy is a critical variable identified both in the literature and by the participants in this research. Motivation and self-esteem are largely determined by the learners' self perceptions or learner identity, in terms of cultural identification, educational experience, gender, age, ethnicity, family background, work history and so on. These are sensitive human issues and ones that all the participants recognized as part of the complexity of taking account of learner needs and identity in the learning process.

> There are so many factors interacting with each other at the same time, and there's a complex dynamic, a tension if you like, between language needs and issues of identity. The teacher makes judgements in terms of the student's

> language ability and how they perceive the student's sense of identity as an Australian. But equally the student's own perceptions are also important. Some students, for example, prefer to be in an ESL class because they want more formal explicit, instruction. They feel that their English is not good enough to be with other English speakers (ID).

A number of participants cited examples of where 'classic ESL learners' chose to be in ALBE classes, because they thought it would improve their fluency and listening skills. The learners identified a learning style that suited them and in fact contradicted generalised conclusions (e.g. Davison et al.1993) that educated LBOTE people should not be placed with lower level learners. Some educated LBOTE students prefer to be in an advanced ESL class, while others prefer to immerse themselves in the host country's culture and so they chose the ALBE option. Participants cited these examples to highlight the difficulty of making definitive statements about learner needs. There was another element cited in the interplay and tension between socio-cultural factors and linguistic factors in learner identity.

> My mother, who arrived in 1939, speaks English with a German accent and makes the very occassional grammar mistake. She is furious if I point it out and she HATES being called a migrant...But the issue becomes the degree to which English can be described as 'foreign' to people long settled or otherwise part of the Australian community and who use English in their everyday lives. Is teaching such people different or special compared to others in a diverse community?
>
> (Faine 2001: 3)

A LBOTE learner may or may not have ESL needs but Faine here raises the question of whether it is necessary to even focus on this issue in a diverse multicultural society such as Australia. A sense of being Australian means different things to different people. Language ability and cultural identification therefore interact in complex ways in terms of how learners construct themselves.

In workplace settings these issues of identity are contextualised within a different kind of cultural identification, that is, the culture of the workplace. Many workers end up in training sessions because they are required to complete modules of training packages to either keep their jobs or be eligible for promotion. Not only is their identity as a worker challenged but they are also expected to perform in a classroom context in which they may feel quite alien. The workplace practitioners saw the accommodation of these issues as a critical variable. Many referred to the delicate negotiations that had to take place before any training could commence.

The identity of learners is also shaped by previous educational experience. Learners from different cultural backgrounds have different expectations of what a class or training session will be like.

> Each learner has a model in their head of what a good learner is and what a good teacher is ... These paradigms are based on cultural factors, which include class, gender, age and ethnicity, and these interact simultaneously to create the learner identity .... Negotiating difference and accommodating these differences is the task of the adult literacy educator (ID).
>
> You walk into the room and there are all these blokes with their hands folded over their chests just glaring at you. Their resentment is evident. They feel quite

> threatened and they have already made up their minds that what you are about to do, is a complete waste of time ...You have to win them over (W3).

These two quotes reflect different elements of this very important variable in the different affective factors impacting on learning. Learner identity and therefore attitude towards learning are very significant issues in the ALBE classrooms. Whether the class is made up of people from ESB backgrounds or a mixture of ESB and LBOTE the teacher is required to negotiate and accommodate individual personalities, needs and attitudes.

6.5 The assessment and placement process

All participants felt that a rigorous assessment and placement process was essential to developing positive learning environments.

> We would conduct a half hour assessment which looked at reading and writing ability but also gathered a lot of information about the person's personal history, educational history, work history and so forth. We would establish why they were coming, what they hoped to achieve, what their interests were, how fluent they were in English, and so forth. We would then give them an idea about what was available and then devise a program. It was a negotiated process (ID).

This quote aptly summarises the approach that most participants described in relation to the assessment process. Teachers were not simply placing learners into ALBE classes purely on the basis of their language or literacy level. A wide range of learner variables was considered. The issue of placement in a particular group was therefore based in part on language or literacy level , for example CGEA level 2, level but other factors were also considered. The composition of the group at any level was considered to be a matter of fine judgement on the assessor's part.

> Sometimes you don't have a choice about where you place someone. I had a case recently of a Somali man who had good oracy but needed literacy. I had concerns, for social reasons and group dynamics, about placing him in either of the available options of either ESL lit or ALBE. He chose the ALBE but he didn't stay. The ideal class for him would have been a group with more men, an ALBE class that was more diverse culturally. The group he went into was very anglo, and very tightly knit. They were long-term locals and were not very accepting of a Somali man. There was no way he could fit into that group (C3).

Other participants also talked about the group dynamics and the delicacy required in introducing new participants. The assessor makes a judgement on the basis of their understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics as well as learning needs. Many participants expressed the view that the social dynamic was at times a more significant variable than the language or literacy level.

Assessment issues in workplaces were also very important, but, depending on the size of the particular workplace, participants did not have as much scope for creating well-balanced groups. This varied from workplace to workplace according to one participant. Sometimes the group was determined by the workplace because they all had to complete the same module of a training package of certificate. However, the initial assessment was considered to be a very important part of identifying particular learning needs and preparing the workers for participation in the class. The assessment therefore served the purpose of an individual introduction for each group member and a diagnostic assessment for the trainer. Group dynamics also play an important part in

the workplace classroom, although participants can not always leave if they do not get on with the group.

Teachers in all settings, therefore, are confronted with a complex range of variables to negotiate, including group dynamics, individual personalities, gender and age, when devising strategies to accommodate the needs of the group and build a collaborative class dynamic.

6.6 Learner variables and class grouping

The profile of any given ALBE class is therefore invariably complex and diverse when all the different variables are applied to each individual. A typical class might include people from different ethnic backgrounds with varying degrees of linguistic competence in standard English, ESB learners with similarly diverse linguistic ability in standard English, a range of ages, gender, family background, values and beliefs, definitions of self, and educational background.

A number of people concluded that it was easier to teach groups that were more similar in terms of age, culture, educational background and linguistic competence. "The more similar the group, the better." However, most acknowledged that it was extremely difficult to create homogeneous groups of students who had similar needs and learning styles. Even in a level 1 ESL class, one teacher observed, there is enormous variation in cultural and educational background and language experience.

Larger institutions were generally able to provide a broader range of classes to suit different needs, while smaller community providers were seen to have less flexibility in this regard. Workplace settings were generally even more restricted in terms of range of class grouping and especially in terms of the hours of training available to participants. Classes in workplaces tend to be of fixed duration (e.g. 10 weeks with perhaps 2-4 hours of training per week).

Organisational constraints are therefore another variable that practitioners felt impacted on their ability to accommodate individual learner needs. Each of the participants described the range of provision within the organisations they worked or had worked in, and was able to explain the rationale behind the structure of classes available. There were a variety of approaches in structuring programs to meet the needs of diverse client groups. Each participant provided models of groupings that reflected the client group their centre served. Most participants agreed that it was preferable to have a range of options for students. This meant that they might be able to study in a few different groups with a variety of content, for example, literacy, computers, numeracy or general curriculum options such as psychology, Australian history or women's studies, in order to meet a range of individual needs. However this was generally not possible in workplaces and there were fewer options available in community settings.

Karen Manwaring (2000) writes of the approach of the Council of Adult Education in bringing together people of different language and cultural backgrounds in classes where shared interest is the key determiner rather than difference.

> Shared interests and a desire to learn are seen as common needs of both sets of students. Students in computer classes, Australian history, science and art and culture classes are identified not by their language background but by their desire to use language in a specific context. (Manwaring 2001:3)

The creation of such classes is a means to providing learners with different content-based classes where they can develop both knowledge and literacy. In the past, ALBE teachers have traditionally focused on building the self-confidence of learners by using texts that reflect the 'lifeworlds' of students. The introduction of the CGEA has, according to many participants, broadened the scope of the content and text types used in the ALBE class. The issue of how teachers then also accommodate the linguistic differences of different types of learners is quite contentious.

6.7 Accommodating difference

As teachers are not always able to control who they have in any given class, they must develop a range of strategies to both accommodate learning needs and facilitate group cohesion. When dealing with students from different linguistic backgrounds teachers require comprehensive knowledge of both language theory and learning theory. Teachers can only accommodate different learning needs if they are able to both define the learner needs and apply appropriate strategies to meet those needs. Chalk and Wilson (2001) suggest a dialectical relationship between learner needs and teaching strategies.

> Differences between learners affect how teachers draw on their theory and methodology.
>
> (Chalk and Wilson 2001: 2)

In the both the focus group discussions and the individual interviews teachers demonstrated an understanding of the process of learning and were able to apply that knowledge when talking about the needs of individual learners. There was an overlay of the common sense in their discussions, but these common sense observations and practices seemed to be grounded in a range of learning theories and methodologies that had been acquired through formal study, professional development, critical reflection and dialogue with other practitioners. The teacher's practice was therefore informed by theory even when they did not name it as such.

A number of teachers when asked how they accommodated the ESL needs of LBOTE learners in their ALBE classes referred to ESL methodologies that they thought worked well with the whole group. Pronunciation of words was an issue that they could not address in any depth in an ALBE class although there were instances where these issues were addressed. A number of participants referred to the CGEA as providing a structure in terms of exploring different text types. Whole language approaches were favoured. Teachers generally felt that grammar was not a good place to start with in the ALBE class, although they felt some grammar instruction was helpful. Generalisations about practice were hard to make since teachers responded to individual questions and made a judgements about how far to go when elaborating on a particular grammatical or linguistic element raised by LBOTE learners. Many participants acknowledged that ALBE students require some explicit instruction about language features.

It was difficult therefore to get a clear response to the question 'How do teachers accommodate the needs of ESL learners in ALBE classrooms' as the following excerpt from one of the focus group demonstrates:

> Int: So, In terms of accommodating the needs of the ESL learner in the ALBE classroom would you say that you don't actually do anything differently to the normal ALBE class?

K1: Well I do, sometimes I'd break a small group away and give them more specific activities, e.g a little assistance with pronunciation.

K4: Well sometimes I get asked questions about the tenses, like future continuous or whatever and I don't know what they're talking about but I will come back to the next class with the right answer.

K1: Well I don't go into detail about those things because you'd lose the ALBE students, whereas in an ESL class I would spend a lot of time on such questions. I wouldn't hesitate. Or the whole idea of practice practice, practice in terms of pronunciation.

K2: I correct that sort of stuff in my intro to psychology class. I quickly do emphasis on that syllable or spelling stuff because I think that's common for both groups. Looking for patterns in spelling and so on. I wouldn't go into tenses and that kind of stuff. I would do pronunciation if the time is right. If the opportunity comes up I will.

K3: I wouldn't go into the complex grammar explanation of things. I think that sometimes that explicit language stuff can be useful for ALBE students. For example with vocabulary, especially more formal language. I think ALBE students have problems with knowing how to pronounce words and the sound letter relationship so they have trouble with more difficult words. So sometimes it can work having them do the same things.

(Focus group 1)

Teachers who did not have ESL training were less able to talk about the language needs of LBOTE learners and felt a little inadequate in meeting those needs. One participant however was able to refer to a range of strategies that could be employed to meet the specific needs of learners with ESL needs:

A lot of language work goes on in an adult literacy class but I'm not an ESL teacher so I can only draw on a literacy repertoire and of course the experience of learning and teaching another language.

Broadly speaking there is a range of strategies I might employ:

- Obviously lots of one to one instruction within the classroom, interacting with students as individuals.
    - Small group work where students themselves negotiate different approaches.
    - Graded tasks and exercises.
    - Explicit instruction through modelling tasks e.g a model recount text, a model oral presentation text.
- Reading around the group, or reading alone (ID).

In workplace settings the key unifying link between learners was the fact that they were all employed in the same place. Teachers in workplace used this fact as a positive strength and built their curriculum around the needs of the workplace. Manwaring's concept of 'shared interest' is extensively utilised in teaching methodologies in the workplace.

6.8 Advantages and disadvantages of integrating learners

When the participants were asked to summarise the advantages and disadvantages of mixed ESL/Literacy classes, there appeared to be some confusion about the purpose of

such a question. Most ALBE classes have some LBOTE learners but it is their level of acculturation that seems to be more important than even their oral language proficiency. Here the nebulousness of the concept of 'Australianess' was raised again and overwhelmingly participants responded 'depends on the mix of the group'.

Some participants felt there was potential for cross-cultural communication with a diverse cultural mix, while others felt this was a 'big ask' for ALBE students struggling with their own learning needs. Others felt that it was too much for the teacher to accommodate. All said "it depends on the mix, context, purpose etc". Donovan describes a community house classroom as an "idealised public space in which differences can be expressed in relative safety" (Donovan 1999:21). However she then goes onto describe an incident where cultural differences resulted in a breakdown of communication over the very contentious issue of the death penalty for heinous crimes (Donovan 1999). Cultural inclusiveness requires acceptance of different values, which can sometimes challenge both the teacher and the learners. Teachers were therefore careful in proclaiming the value of cross-cultural communication but felt that it was desirable in an ideal sense.

Participation in ALBE classes was perceived to be advantageous for ESL learners because they would be exposed to 'natural' language usage and Australian culture, but equally the student might develop non-standard and colloquial language that they might use inappropriately. A number of teachers cited the positive benefits a cross-cultural group would have for the self-esteem of native speakers if they were given the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of the culture, idiomatic language and so forth. They would be the experts on Australian language and culture.

Some teachers felt it was a positive thing that ESL learners raise issues of grammar rules and this could benefit the ALBE learner to begin to develop this meta-language. However teachers felt that ALBE students were generally resistant to acquiring the rules and did not absorb the concepts despite repetition and reinforcement of the definitions of parts of speech. This was seen to be a reflection of differences in previous educational experiences. On the other hand, some teachers felt that the ESL needs of students would not be systematically met in such a context.

Here again the issue of how ALBE learners might be intimidated by educated ESL learners was raised. The following comment from one participant sums up those concerns:

> Well I wouldn't say that it doesn't have a benefit but it's more a question of how many students can you give that advantage to without disadvantaging others. It's like standing on a box at the footy to get a better view. If everyone does it then no one gets a better view.
>
> There are also issues of educational level when we take students into our classrooms. The university-educated ESL students for example. Are some of the things we do in the ALBE classroom suitable for the university-educated ESL students? They can contribute a lot of knowledge to the class for example, but on the other hand, the ALBE students might be discouraged to go through the thinking process that we might like them to do if there are people who clearly know more than them. The ALBE students might feel their ideas look silly or just not worthy. I've had this situation where the ALBE students don't want to say anything because they don't want to look stupid. (K1)

The point raised here by the teacher has to do with the complexities of accommodating the linguistic and cultural differences between ESB and LBOTE learners. It was generally felt that the vocabulary needs of LBOTE learners with ESL needs were different and the differences in cultural knowledge were difficult to accommodate. Given the complexity of issues at stake it was also very difficult to get a definitive statement on the advantages and disadvantages that all might agree upon. There was a considerable diversity of opinion and each point raised was accompanied by a qualification citing exceptions to the case. Even the teachers that thought it desirable to have a cultural mix, felt there were disadvantages for all learners. Ideal groupings where all learners might benefit seemed to be an intangible goal.

6.9 *Impact of policy on learner needs and practitioner discourses*

There is another dimension to the responses of participants and that is the political implications of whatever they may say. This is a commentary on the limitations of any kind of research of this nature, but also reflects the changing landscape for ALBE and ESL in policy terms. Participants were very concerned to protect the needs of both ALBE and ESL learners.

The ALBE classroom accommodates a diversity of learners, from a range of cultural backgrounds. A recurring theme presented by some of the participants was that the conflation of language and literacy, rather than disadvantaging learners with ESL needs, in fact disadvantaged ESB learners who had negative experiences of schooling and lacked confidence in their ability to learn. The needs of the traditional ESB ALBE learner were seen to be difficult to meet due to complex sociocultural and socioeconomic reasons. Many ESB learners with literacy needs are embarrassed by their inability to manage written texts, which can impact on their ability to improve. This group was perceived to be vulnerable to changes in policy.

Participants pointed to the inadequacies of the Commonwealth funded LANT (Language and Numeracy Training) program in identifying these learners. The process for identifying ESB people with literacy needs is potentially humiliating for clients and so they are reluctant to self-identify. Manwaring and O'Maley (2001) found that the Mutual Obligation element of LANT programs created resentment and hostility amongst unemployed people who have been assessed as having literacy needs. This had a negative impact on their willingness to engage.

Identifying clients with ESL needs is an easier process and these learners are more willing and less ashamed to self identify as having language and literacy needs. At a consultation session, conducted by the Department of Employment training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) in April 2001, one provider representative expressed the view that there was a danger that the needs of unemployed ESB Mutual Obligation clients with literacy needs were being over looked in the new program. Providers in the telephone survey gave examples of people who had literacy, rather than language needs, being inappropriately placed in a class of ESL learners.

The amalgamation of language and literacy is in part due to the similarities between the two disciplines, but it is also a pragmatic decision made to streamline and simplify the administration of language and literacy funding made available by the Commonwealth. The Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) board in Victoria made a similar decision to combine language and literacy for funding

purposes. Michael Chalk and Rachel Wilson discuss this issue in a Literacy Link article:

> Some adult literacy providers have expressed concern that ALBE provision may decrease as a result of the amalgamation, given that ALBE is generally more problematic and more expensive to deliver. The ACE (Adult Community Education) sector is experiencing a strong demand for ESL programs, which is likely to take up the majority of available 'language and literacy' places. This visible demand may displace ALBE clients who are traditionally more difficult to identify and retain in programs.
>
> (Chalk and Wilson 2001:3)

The invisibility of ESB literacy learners within the system has caused many of the participants to feel protective of their students. This, in part, explains the fact that the majority of participants felt that the needs of this group took precedence in the ALBE classroom and that learners with ESL needs benefited from ALBE methodology even if all their specific language needs were not met. Some felt that the ESL lobby was more powerful and had greater input into policy formulation. Such perceptions might adversely impact on collaboration between the two fields in devising programs and methodologies that might better meet the need of all learners.

These changes in policy also caused participants to question the purpose of this research: "Why is this question being asked when it is ALBE students who are missing out more and more?" So policy factors have undoubtedly impacted on the responses of participants to the overall question, which initially sought to shed light on the needs of LBOTE learners in adult literacy contexts. Were the policy conditions different, and if for example, the Commonwealth were offering increased funding to programs which promoted cultural and linguistic diversity, rather than the achievement of standards prescribed by accredited curricula and the National Reporting System, then participants may have viewed the discussion from a different perspective.

7. Lessons from the workplace

The interviews with workplace practitioners were interesting because language and literacy programs are designed to meet the needs and requirement of the Training Reform Agenda and Industry restructuring. Workplace trainers therefore must accommodate the complexity of variables discussed in this paper within a broader agenda and a context that is not usually identified as a place for formal classroom learning, namely the workplace. The practitioners who were interviewed in this research all had backgrounds in literacy education and therefore talked about the complexities of applying the principles of adult learning and language and literacy methodologies in contexts where those traditions, beliefs and values were unfamiliar and, in many cases, undervalued. Workplaces have very specific reasons for engaging in training and that training has to be seen to benefit the overall performance of the company. In the discussion 'Talking shop' (Waterhouse et al. 2001) Virgona argues that employers increasingly want to see value for the money spent and do not see education per se as their business. The discourses of industry therefore have to be accommodated into the practice (Waterhouse 2001).

Some of the participants talked about running 'traditional' language and literacy classes in the workplace but generally found it difficult to achieve measurable

outcomes in the limited time allocated. Employers were generally not keen to release workers for more than two hours per week. In some places the language class was offered out of work hours. Transposing formal classroom delivery into such a context required some rethinking on the practitioner's part. Innovative approaches were therefore required to ensure that employers' requirements were met and that the workers felt that they too had benefited.

> The goal is to achieve a win/win situation - where employers feel the workplace has benefited and workers feel they have achieved something. Integrated approaches to learning therefore work best. So we use a lot of problem solving, action learning, peer learning approaches. Essentially, integrating the best ideals of literacy as a social practice. (W1)

One example of such practice was a project conducted in the automotive industry when workers were organised into teams where each team had to work together to design, develop and build a billy-cart. This involved a range of communication, planning and negotiation skills, where participants were required to survey customers to assist with design specifications. Other skills included costing, technical drawing, and all the process followed by a project team in designing new products (Sefton, Waterhouse and Deakin 1994).

Another example was a project conducted in the printing industry where critical literacy and numeracy skills were used to improve practices in a particular workplace (Spyrou and Parrett 1998). What is important in these examples was that the teachers utilised action learning and problem-posing methodologies and drew on the worker's knowledge of the industry to create products which create better workplaces. The value of such integrated approaches, however, cannot necessarily be measured only in terms of language and literacy competency.

> There was this guy, Kevin, in one of the groups I worked with who didn't have a formal education but he had years and years of experience in the industry and was able to offer insights and suggestions for how to improve things. He didn't have literacy but he was able to contribute. So we used a lot of talking strategies to build their understanding of how to create the finished product, which was a report to their employers about improving workplace practices. The group owned the product and they took on leadership roles at every stage of the process, defining the problem, devising the survey, getting the report together and so on. (W3).

In these contexts the differences between different learners are used as a positive element. The group is united by a common goal, and each individual is able to contribute to the creation of a product. The task of the teacher in this context is to enable all participants to contribute what they are able. Sometimes this meant working with individual needs and setting individual goals. Sometimes it meant 'winning over' resistant members. Sometimes it meant doing explicit language or literacy work with the whole group or an individual. This teacher described a whole range of strategies she employed to build the groups confidence and hence competence.

> The most important thing of all is respecting what each individual has to offer and making their contributions seem worthwhile and valued. (W3)

These practices require a commitment on the part of the teacher to accommodate the competing interests and needs of all stakeholders. The voices from the workplace need

to be heard. In discussing the need for a paradigm shift in vocational education in Australia Waterhouse wrote:

> We summarised the required shift as a move from 'a focus on predetermined content for delivery' towards dialogue with stakeholders on design for effective learning'. (Waterhouse 2001: 17)

The innovative approaches adopted in some workplace programs therefore provide good models of processes and pedagogies that seek to accommodate diversity and develop language skills (Spyrou 1993; Spyrou and Kay 1996). Some of the stories from the workplace demonstrate how the complexities of language, literacy, and culture are negotiated and provide insights that can be applied to other contexts. The integrated learning models, and the action learning team based methodologies, could equally be applied in TAFE and community settings. The context may be different, for example, creating better communities, or increasing participation in a democratic society. The lesson which some of the best workplace practices demonstrate is that learning which has a concrete purpose has the potential to engage groups comprising a diverse range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Opportunities, for real and purposeful education exist in the most challenging of contexts (McKenna 2002; Waterhouse 2001).

8. Discourses of diversity – challenges and opportunities

Difference and diversity are recurring themes throughout this paper and apply to theoretical positions, policy directions, types of provision, pedagogy, learner needs and the views of practitioners. Naming this diversity is both challenging and opportune in the current climate, where human capital theories dominate political discourse and policy formulation (Kell 2001; Marginson 1997; Luke 1992; Black 2002), rather than theories of social capital and socioeconomic wellbeing (Eckersley 1999; Falk 2000). Whereas the notion of social capital suggests a broader agenda of both formal and informal approaches to lifelong learning, theories of human capital limit the opportunities for new paradigms of learning to emerge (Waterhouse 2002; Falk 2000). Marginson (1993) argues that attempts by the education sector to lobby government have been thwarted by the promotion of the concept of 'provider capture', whereby politicians and bureaucrats operate on the assumption that public services have been 'captured' by the professions that provide them. The motivations of these professionals can therefore be dismissed as 'self-interest', rather than genuine concern for the needs of clients or the concerns of government. This phenomenon poses significant challenges for all sectors of education, especially the adult sector of ALBE and ESL.

If such assumptions underpin the formulation of the LANT program, for example, where a diverse range of language and literacy programs have been combined for administrative ease, any consultative processes the government establishes with the field to seek advice on the effectiveness of this program will invariably result in discord. Foucaldian notions of 'governmentality' (Foucalt 1991) can be applied to this analysis. Government interventions are ostensibly devised to improve existing practice in some way or to further the wider agenda of the government. For progress to occur Government requires the support, advice and co-operation of the providers responsible for the implementation of new initiatives. The response of providers to

these representations and interventions is therefore of critical importance. The competitive nature of tendering for LANT programs means that the ESL and ALBE fields are in a sense in competition with each other.

The differences between the ALBE and ESL fields are grounded in the social and political history of each field, which has in turn, developed its own way of relating theory to practice (Baynham 1991). Some of these differences have been explored in the discussions with practitioners at the interface. The relationship of each field to government policies and agendas has also shaped these discourses as Baynham suggests:

> It is certainly necessary to take into account the political, economic and institutional factors that have led to the development of the TESOL and ABE fields, the vested interests and the allocation of resources that have shaped them. (Baynham 1991:5)

A critical understanding of how such factors influence practitioner discourses and learner discourses is therefore vital for identifying opportunities where progress might occur. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to critically interrogate these discourses in any detail, this last section will attempt to raise a number of issues worthy of further consideration and action in relation to the interface between ALBE and ESL.

8.1 The challenge of ideology

Emerging from all discourses is a sense of truth, which then becomes 'common sense' understandings or shared beliefs. These truths are then assumed in the formulation of new truths. Fairclough (1998) argues that these discourses need to be interrogated in terms of how relations of power create authority in spoken and written texts. The taken for granted assumptions underlying many authoritative texts need to be identified and examined for alternative truths to emerge (Fairclough 1989).

In attempting to penetrate the discourses of ALBE and ESL the question of ideology surfaces as a key to the resolution of the case. Values, beliefs and assumptions about the needs of learners are unquestionably complex. Each field has developed a shared culture of values, beliefs and modes of practice, which, whilst not uniform or homogenous, reflect the acceptance of authoritative theoretical and philosophical paradigms about the how and why of language and literacy acquisition and proficiency. The challenge for both tribes is to openly and critically discuss these different paradigms through a process of communication that "assumes a consensual background of truth, appropriateness and sincerity so that their opposites become noticeable and accountable ..." (Young 1990:184). How this might validly be enacted is through a process that Habermas calls 'communicative action' which is reliant on goodwill, shared experience and acknowledgement of the other as an interlocutor not an object (in Young 1990). Given the perceived threats to the specialisations of each field implicit in government policy and program implementation, such dialogue is both necessary and challenging on a personal and professional level.

There is evidence, however, that such discussions are taking place within the adult education sector and that practitioners from each field interact and work together in common workplaces and on common projects. The work by Davison et al. (1993), Hammond et al. (1992) and Millin (1994) is evidence that the concerns of ALBE are of interest to ESL practitioners. The number of ALBE teachers undertaking ESL

training is further evidence. Articles in various professional journals (e.g. Manwarring 2001, Faine 2001) over the past few years demonstrate that the possibilities and opportunities for cross-fertilisation between the two fields are present, and the will to carry out this work is there.

The participants in this research similarly demonstrated a willingness to explore issues and interrogate common sense perceptions of 'good practice'. Some ALBE practitioners struggle with what one participant described as the 'stretch between ALBE and ESL'. Discussions such as the ones contained in this research provide a bridge between the two discourses. The impact of government policy and subsequent allocation of resources does however mean that these discussions will also invariably have a political dimension. These issues need to be put clearly on the table if progress is to occur.

8.2 Language, literacy and the broader agenda

Important questions for adjudication in the ALBE and ESL interface, in relation to the issue of language competence, knowledge, cultural diversity and social wellbeing, remain a challenge, and require further interrogation. Black (2002) refutes dominant assumptions about the relationship between literacy and economic wellbeing suggesting that it is not literacy skill or lack of it that causes people to be unemployed. He points to economic factors rather than human capital issues. Reich (1991) paints a vision of the future where only a very small proportion of the workforce, the symbolic analysts, will require the higher order literacy practices advocated by Lo Bianco and Freebody (2001) for literacy in the 21st century. This raises the question: Whose language and literacy benchmarks and for what purpose? An egalitarian democratic country such as Australia might, as Lo Bianco and Freebody (2001) suggest, need its citizens to possess the skills necessary for effective participation, but what of cultural and linguistic diversity? Is it a matter of tolerance or celebration? Is language and literacy the vehicle, a means to an end, or the end itself? Linguistic arguments have value and are useful knowledge for teachers but to what extent should practitioners use linguistic benchmarks based on some form of ideal 'standard' English? Is the purpose of language and literacy learning communicative competence or language proficiency? How might the views of the learner be accommodated? Should their paradigms of language, literacy and learning be challenged or accommodated in the case?

Waterhouse (2001) suggests that not everyone values literacy as much as educators and practitioners might like them to; that literacy does not carry for all, the same sense of possiblities that educators envision. ALBE practitioners invariably talked about literacy as a process of emancipation for the learner, a process whereby the learners might access new knowledge, and ideas that develop understanding and increased levels of control and proficiency in everyday life. Literacy is the means by which they come to know the world. The ESL practitioners expressed concern that the specific linguistic needs of LBOTE learners are met; that they are provided with all the necessary knowledge and understanding of the adopted language and culture of Australian English. There are overlaps and similarities in the two communities of interest.

Quigley (1997) argues that adult education, and particularly literacy education should be a negotiated process. The learners should have more influence in how their

educational pathways are constructed. The concept of learner agency, where learners are given the necessary support and opportunities to advocate on their own behalf, opens up possibilities for new pedagogies and different approaches to adult learning. Participants in this research described how learners themselves take action to ensure their learning needs are met. More explicit attention to the knowledge that learners have of their own learning needs provides opportunities for progress in the competing goals of adult language, literacy and general education. The lessons from the workplace suggest that adult learning can be facilitated through communicative learning that explicitly values and engages learner agency.

If language and literacy were to be contextualised within the broader framework of wellbeing, in the sense of community (the classroom), the individual and society, then different pedagogical approaches might be enacted to serve this broader agenda.

8.3 The promise of pedagogy – ideals and action

The literature and the contributions from participants in this research reveal that pedagogical practice is critical to the identification and accommodation of the diversity of needs in the classroom. Idealised notions of good practice exist, which if followed, should lead to successful outcomes (see Appendix 3 for McGuirk's indicators of good practice). The question that really needs to be asked is: to what extent can teachers be expected to meet individual needs as opposed to the demands of the whole group? Is it even possible for teachers to accommodate all the different nuances of the many cultures represented in their classrooms? Ethnic, linguistic, educational, personal, family, cognitive, class and motivational factors provide a challenging task for practitioners. The individual needs of any given learner are complex, but what does the teacher do once they understand the learner profile? How might they make a difference? What kinds of strategies might they employ? And what kind of support would they require to effect such processes?

A number of pedagogical approaches were named in the data from the field, and in the literature. A brief summary of each will be mentioned here to indicate its potential in addressing the case of the ALBE and ESL interface.

Critical literacy: The concept of critical literacy draws on insights from systemic functional linguistics and critical theory A critical reading of spoken and written texts involves an understanding of how language is used to construct meaning and how different values and relations of power are enacted in the texts. This provides scope for interrogating cultural and linguistic diversity and the hidden meanings of texts (Giroux 1989; Campbell and Green 2000).

Action learning: Such approaches advocate a problem solving approach in the development of shared products, using collaborative team work approaches, which are enacted through a systematic process of naming the problem, developing a plan and working together to develop the knowledge and skills to create the solution. Peer learning is an integral part of such a process so that a diversity of learners can be accommodated. Such approaches require facilitators (teachers) who understand the concept of underpinning skills. An action learning approach to working with LBOTE learners in ALBE settings was used in the curriculum developed by Millin (1994).

Development of knowledge: This approach uses the development of critical knowledge as the goal of language and literacy learning. The purpose is to acquire

language competency while exploring issues or bodies of knowledge that are of interest to the learner. The choice of what is important knowledge and for whom would be a matter for negotiation. This process engages learners in the process of knowledge production (Whitty 1985; Quigley 1997).

Learning to learn strategies: This process is embedded in other practices where the learner develops a meta-language of learning. Such an approach would make explicit the cognitive and behavioral processes that interact in effective learning (McCormack and Pancini 1990). An exploration of different learning styles, for example, visual, aural, sensual, action would be included in this strategy (Kolb 1981). Such approaches acknowledge learner agency and provide learners with insights into how they might direct their own learning.

Cross-cultural communication: Developing a sense of community in the classroom is an important element of developing an effective learning environment (Falk 2000). A conscious process of including ethnically inclusive materials and making cultural differences explicit provides for the diversity of backgrounds in the group (Davison et al. 1993). Learners are given the opportunity to be cultural experts by naming the values and practices of their culture.

Dialogic practice: Dialogic practice underpins many of the discourses explored in this paper as well as many of the practices advocated by practitioners and included in the list of strategies above. Dialogue is the process by which learners can make meaning of text (Freire 1976; Flecha 2000; Lemke 1992; Suda 1995a), say what they know (Puigvert et al. 1999; Suda 1997), build knowledge (Suda 1998), critique powerful discourses (Freire 1976; Flecha 2000; Fairclough 1989; Suda 1995b), and develop as lifelong learners (Suda 2000). A sense of community can be developed in the classroom, which then contributes to an 'elemental' connection to the other (Lingus 1994). Each of the examples of practice identified, where difference and diversity were accommodated, was ultimately dependent on dialogic processes between the teacher and the group, and within the group. Through this process the teacher's knowledge and the student's knowledge interact to form communicative action.

Each of these pedagogical approaches assumes a high level of professionalism and competence on the teacher's part. Professional development is a recurring theme in the literature. What do ESL teachers need to know to teach ALBE students? What do ALBE teachers need to know to accommodate the needs of learners with ESL needs? And how might this knowledge best be developed?

8.4 Professional development – teachers as learners

Throughout the literature professional development is cited as an integral part of better practice at the ALBE and ESL interface. The professional development kit developed by Millin (1994), is an eight hour professional development program that takes teachers through many of the issues raised in this paper, using an action learning approach. It provides a good model of a formal professional development activity that provides teachers with theoretical knowledge and practical methodologies. Davison et al. (1993) suggest that ALBE teachers would benefit from increased knowledge of how language is acquired. A number of participants in the research referred to the applicability of ESL methodologies for ALBE learners. There is no doubt that ALBE teachers need to understand the cognitive factors impacting on the acquisition of

literacy and also the process of language acquisition. The more knowledge the teacher has of the various factors that impact on the learner, the more they can draw on theories and methodologies in their 'teacher's bag of tricks' (K2).

Newcombe (1999) reflects on how her teaching has changed over the years as she has gained new knowledge and theories, as well as critically reflecting on what does and doesn't work with different learners. In this article, she presents a reasoned and balanced discussion on the place of phonics in the teaching of reading and spelling.

> 'Central to my more recent practice has been my study of systemic functional linguistics and genre based approaches to teaching, although it is also true that, like a bower bird, I have gathered teaching strategies from all sorts of places.'
>
> (Newcombe 1999: 3)

Within ALBE methodology there are differences of opinion as to what is or is not appropriate methodology to use with 'fragile' learners. The participants of this research, for example, tended to think the teaching of grammar was not the best place to start with ALBE learners, and had concerns about the teaching of phonemic awareness. These approaches are seen to be more relevant for the ESL learner. Whilst it is not within the scope of this paper to discuss this issue in depth, it is clear that ideological factors also impact on the methodologies that ALBE teachers use in the classroom. It is not necessarily a lack of knowledge, on the teacher's part, that makes them teach, or not teach, grammar or phonemic awareness in the ALBE classroom. Rather, it is a reflection of ideological positions within the field, as Baynham (1991) suggests, when he refers to the history and politics of both fields. Professional development activities must therefore take account of the pre existing paradigms of the ALBE field.

Professional development can however take many different forms.

> Ray Townshead: My learning has been fractured, formal, informal, embarrassing, funny. I've learned primarily by listening and talking with 'the tribe' around me and by creating different viewpoints that I can subject to critical scrutiny.
>
> Krina Virgona: The most important PD experiences for me have been where I have worked alongside others. In these situations I believe I have done my most exciting work. Having an opportunity to look through someone else's eyes and do things in a somewhat different way challenges our assumptions and practices.
>
> (Waterhouse et al. 2001: 5)

Both these comments come from practitioners involved in workplace learning, who, as suggested earlier, have had to accommodate the needs of a range of stakeholders in different workplaces. However, they are also practitioners who work as part of a team, where theory and practice are integrated in their daily work, where the work of their team matches the kinds of practice they advocate in workplaces. Professional development in such a context is both a formal and informal process.

For many language and literacy teachers however, the professional development they receive 'on the job' is dependent on the practices of their work place. Many teachers do not have the opportunity to talk with 'the tribe' or work in a team situation where such cross-fertilization can occur. In fact many teachers work in relatively isolated contexts, in term of their classroom practice. Professional development opportunities within the adult education field tend to include activities such as: conferences, forums,

workshops, adult literacy teaching (ALT) courses, university certificate, diploma and post graduate degree programs in language and literacy, and, increasingly, on-line professional development. Teacher mentoring approaches in NLT are particularly popular. Alternative approaches to professional development have however been canvassed.

> Karen Dymke: Perhaps the project (Learning Differently) exemplifies what tutors are looking for in PD: academic learning to extend current knowledge, practical teaching strategies and ways to implement them both formally and informally.
>
> Sarah Deasy: If we want to link theory and practice in more authentic ways... I think classroom-based research is where we need to be testing the theories and developing new ones. What do we need to do to get more projects up and running? Link ACFE regions, universities and TAFE's? Fund more projects?
>
> (Wilson et al. 2001: 12-13)

Both the approaches advocated above could further teacher's knowledge of ALBE and ESL theory and practices. Models for practitioner research are therefore worthy of further investigation, as are models that engage practitioners in a process of dialogue that enables them to critically evaluate what they know, as well as learn from their peers. Discourse analysis (Fairclough 1989), provides a systematic process for interrogating theory, policy and common sense assumptions about practice. The application of 'good practice' learning principles applies to teachers as well as learners.

Participants of this research indicated that practitioners are sometimes alienated by the theoretical density of academic discourse and do not recognize the relevance of theory to daily practice. Practitioner discourses are however, theoretical by nature. Connecting practitioner theorizing with academic discourse is a dialectical approach, which is worth pursuing. Valuable cross-fertilisation could occur through such dialogue. Practitioners are lifelong learners also and their development is dependent on adult learning strategies that foster engagement (Suda 2000).

8.5 Research

The interface between ALBE and ESL raises a number of issues that are worthy of further research. Our knowledge of the factors that influence learner motivation and aptitude is still limited. There is a wealth of research on English as a second language acquisition (see Brown and Gonzo 1995; Crystal 1987; Ellis 1994) and a wide range of perspectives on literacy acquisition and development (Campbell and Green 2000).

Our knowledge of how language and culture interrelate is still incomplete. More work needs to be done in this area, particularly in gaining a better understanding of how 'vernacular literacies' relate to more formal literacy practices and social capital (Barton and Hamilton 1998). Understanding non-standard forms of language and the way they are constructed in different social and cultural settings is therfore valuable knowledge for better practice at the ALBE and ESL interface, and would build on similar studies conducted elsewhere (Heath 1990; Labov 1972b).

Critically reflective practice, and team teaching approaches with ALBE and ESL practitioners, could contribute new understandings of how to accommodate a range of needs in the ALBE classroom. Such work would be subjected to critical evaluation

(Davison et al. 1993). Action research with academics and practitioners, working together to better understand the nature of ethnically inclusive curriculum, would be another positive activity.

The concept of learner agency and hence learner autonomy needs to be explored in greater detail. What do learners want to know and how do they want to learn it? What is the preferred learning style of different learners? What sort of teaching practice and what sort of classrooms make learners feel a sense of autonomy in the process of learning and building skills? What do learners do to further the development of knowledge and skills? Policy makers, as well as practitioners, could learn a lot from such understandings. The notion of 'provider capture' might seem offensive to caring professionals genuinely concerned with the needs of adult learners, but that concern must take account of the lived experience, values, beliefs and actions of their clients.

Future research should therefore increasingly include the perspectives of learners, who, as adults, need to be included in the framing of research that concerns their learning needs. Puigvert et al. (1999) and Flecha (2000) describe the participation of learners in the framing of research on adult education in Spain. The learners provided insights that the researchers were unable to perceive because of their lack of knowledge of the group they were attempting to study. As a result of the learners' input and perspectives, different questions were asked. Given the resistance of many adults to participate in further education (Kearns et al. 2000) such an approach might lead to research that asks the right sorts of questions and addresses the needs of a broader range of adult learners. This kind of research would, however, require more inclusive approaches to curriculum development and classroom practice in the first instance.

The Dialogic Literary Circles in Spain provide a fascinating example of how learner agency and dialogic processes can lead to transformative action, as evidenced by the formation of the collective of adult learners, FACEPA, an adult education movement which is run by the participants (Suda 2000). Further research could also be conducted to identify examples of innovative practice, research and policy development in other parts of the globe. We have much to learn from the approaches of other countries (Suda 2000).

8.6 Culturally inclusive curriculum – diversity and participation

The advent of competency-based accredited curricula in the ALBE field in Victoria was met with some resistance (McKenna, 2001) and caused considerable debate (Suda 1994; McCormack 1994). ALBE teachers, have however, adapted to the new agenda, as evidenced in *Writing Our Practice* (Baker et al. 1995) and *Negotiating Competence* (Sanguinetti 1996). That the process of accreditation and competency based approaches to curriculum design has been beneficial in many respects, appears to be widely accepted (McKenna 2001, Macrae 2001). Issues of cultural inclusiveness and the accommodation of the needs of learners from very different backgrounds have not however, been satisfactorily addressed. There is still concern, therefore, that the development of real and purposeful learning, which meets the needs of the whole person, is compromised in the confines of competency -based accredited curricula and task-based approaches.

> Teaching that sees an individual need and responds to it in the context of a healthy relationship is often one of the most transformative experiences we can have in life. If accreditation becomes the central preoccupation of teaching and learning, much of what is of central educational importance is at risk of falling away. (Macrae 2001)

In her critique of competency based accredited curricula, Macrae (2001) expresses reservations about the relationships that develop between teachers and vulnerable learners, where measurement, accountability and certification dominate. Brown (1997) maintains that competency- based curriculum defines what should be learned in terms of outcomes, without specifying how this might occur. Experienced teachers, who have a strong theoretical base to their practice, accommodate such changes in policy direction and continue to educate (Harris 1982), rather than train their learners to 'perform' the required assessment tasks. Harris refers to the dual purpose of education (with a small e) as a process of socialization into human society, and Education (with a capital e) as the fulfillment of the potential of the individual (Harris 1982). The concept of Education appears to have been overlooked in the training agenda and is reflected in the increased usage of the term 'training' rather than 'teaching' (Suda, 1995b).

The concept of Education, is however, very important in ALBE, as many learners who attend literacy classes have been unable to access knowledge during their schooling because their literacy needs have not been met (Suda, 1998). Language and literacy are part of the process of coming to know the world. Moraitis and McCormack (1995) explored the issue of public space and the cultures that determine them in order to construct literacy practices that engage learners in public life. Their curriculum is structured to reveal the underpinning values in public debate texts (Moraitis1998). Hogan (1998) explores concepts of liberal democratic education in the light of calls to include citizenship education in the school curriculum, and concludes that such an education should develop capacities for social justice and pluralism (Hogan 1998). Both ESB and LBOTE learners need to understand the political, cultural and social history of the country in which they live. They too must be citizens in a democratic society and learn how to critically read the texts of their adopted country, irrespective of their level of education in their country of origin. In this regard, there is an overlap between the needs of the educated LBOTE learners, and the traditional ALBE learner who may have limited education.

A culturally inclusive curriculum must therefore account for the needs of the citizens of a democratic society, who have a diversity of needs, but who share a stake in the community we call Australia. The development of language and literacy is therefore one element, a very important element, in the process of lifelong learning and social participation.

The report, entitled *Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities, A Conceptual Framework for Further Education* (Bradshaw 1999) provides a framework for the design of culturally inclusive curriculum and the development of Education in the sense Harris intends; a framework that celebrates diversity and is culturally inclusive. Four basic principles guide curriculum development:

> **Multiplicity**: encompasses diversity, complexity and paradox
>
> **Connectedness**: emphasises the educational imperative to connect different elements of the learning process

> **Critical intelligence**: includes learning to learn, judgement, analysis, and knowledge
>
> **Transformation**: power to take action to effect change, allied to the notion of agency (summarised from Bradshaw 1999: 49)

This framework provides guidelines for the construction of a curriculum to meet a diverse range of learner needs, and could be employed to accommodate the needs of learners at the ALBE/ESL interface. ALBE and ESL would thereby be contextualized within the broader framework of lifelong learning, a cradle to grave Education that fulfills the potential of the individual, thus providing a common shared purpose for the acquisition of language, literacy and communication skills. Such a framework does not preclude the explicit teaching of language and literacy proficiency but rather offers a broad and meaningful context for achieving language competence.

A useful resource for practitioners working at the interface of ALBE and ESL would be to produce examples of culturally inclusive curriculum materials, with a range of language and literacy activities, including action learning approaches and peer learning, with socially relevant content themes (Millin 1994). Such resources could be incorporated into professional development activities, where practitioners receive guidance in culturally inclusive curriculum design.

9. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to explore the diversity of discourses that converge and interact at the ALBE and ESL interface. The issues are complex and have required interrogation on a number of levels, including the political. The purpose for this case study is to draw attention to issues that are fundamental to lifelong learning, or rather lifelong Education, and the socioeconomic wellbeing of Australia as a linguistically and culturally diverse democratic society. Accommodating the communication needs of people from very different backgrounds, whether they are ESB or LBOTE, is not just a matter of concern for language and literacy practitioners but rather an issue that underpins the fundamental needs of effective citizenship and participation in a democratic society.

ALBE and ESL are therefore embedded in the broader educational agenda of lifelong learning, which includes vocational, as well as, general education. A broader framework for practitioners operating at the interface of ALBE and ESL, and for policy makers and theorists, is to see how their practice might contribute to a more desirable society where socioeconomic wellbeing is enjoyed by all. As Bradshaw concludes:

> Further education can make a significant contribution towards the creation of the future, towards personal and social transformation, towards a learning culture, towards community building. It is a vision of society that advocates a peaceful, prosperous and healthy future for all the globe. (Bradshaw 1999)

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Appendix 1: Focus group questions

1. What do you teach? What sort of classes? What is the composition of the class?
2. Do you consider yourself primarily an adult literacy teacher or an ESL teacher?
3. What's the difference between an ESL teacher and a literacy teacher?
4. Define what you mean by an ESL Learner?
5. Define what you mean by an adult literacy learner?
6. What are the key differences between learners?
7. In what contexts if any do you think it appropriate to place ESL students in ALBE classrooms? How are these issues addressed in the assessment process?
8. How do you deal with different learner needs?
9. Do you use different methodologies for ALBE or ESL students?
10. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having mixed ESL and adult literacy classes?

Appendix 2:
Questionnaire for providers of literacy and ESL programs

Region: _____

Type of provider:

TAFE ■

Community ■

Private ■

Other _____

Co-ordinator: _____ No of teachers: _____

1. What courses are offered at your centre?

Course		No of classes	Hours per week
ESL	■	-----	-----
LITERACY	■	-----	-----
ESL LITERACY	■	-----	-----
NUMERACY	■	-----	-----
SCIENCE	■	-----	-----
COMPUTER	■	-----	-----
OTHER GENERAL ED	■	-----	-----

2. Do you have people who speak English as a Second (3^{rd}, 4^{th}) language in ALBE classes?

   YES ■ NO ■

3. If yes, are they generally long term residents with high oracy but have literacy needs?

   YES ■ NO ■

4. Do you ever place newer arrivals with low oracy into ALBE classes with native speakers?

   YES ■ NO ■

5. If yes, into what sort of classes?

   General literacy ■

   Computer ■

   Other General Ed ■

6. What sort of qualifications do the ALBE teachers have?

(Please say number next to respective qualification. (e.g. Primary 4 tutors)

Teaching Qualifications

Primary ■

Secondary ■

TAFE ■

Certificate 4 Workplace trainer and assessor ■

Degree ■

Higher degree ■

ESL Qualifications ■

Volunteers with no formal qualifications ■

7. What sort of professional development is available to teachers?
8. To what extent do funding policies determine the programs you are able to offer?

   Comment:_____

9. Is your centre able to cater for a range of needs?

   YES ■ NO ■

Comment:_____

10. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having mixed ESL and adult lit classes?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COMMENTS

Appendix 3: Best practice in literacy and numeracy programs

News South Wales Department of Education & Training, Access Division, 2001 (Mc Guirk 2001)

Best practice can be described as a process of continuous improvement. It also involves moral, ethical, ideological, cultural and political considerations. Best practice programs promote an active literacy and numeracy that enhances learners' capacity to think, create and question in order to participate effectively in society and work.

Best practice teachers are enthusiastic, qualified practitioners, who articulate the theories which underpin their practice and have high expectations of their learners. They participate in regular professional development and keep up to date with current resources and changes in the field. They continually reflect on and evaluate their teaching / training.

Best practice programs:

- Focus on the learner
- Encourage learners to be active participants in the learning process through negotiation of content and processes
- Encourage independent, collaborative learners
- Are relevant to learners' interest and experiences
- Cater for diverse learning needs and learning styles, as well as diverse cultural backgrounds
- Demonstrate a clear relationship between theory, research and practice
- Integrate and contextualise literacy and numeracy into learners' daily social, cultural and work practices
- Are flexible in their approach
- Integrate assessment into course design and offer a wide range of assessment tasks which have explicit criteria and are linked to course content or work practices
- Encourage learners to monitor their own progress
- Report on results of assessment in a clear accessible way
- Occur in pleasant and comfortable surroundings and create a positive social climate
- Offer individual attention and support through educational and personal counselling, advisory and support services or have clear referral mechanisms
- Offer learner support such as libraries, individual learning centres, study centres, mentoring or tutoring
- Link literacy and numeracy training to b improvement programs such as Total Quality Management, team development, skills training, Occupational Health and Safety programs

Appendix 4: Yorio'sClassification

Yorio, C. (1994) 'Classification of Learner Variables', in Brown, H.D., *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (Third edition), Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 277.

Appendix 5: Adult Learner Characteristics

Adult Literacy and ESL, Literacy Learners: A Comparison

Characteristic	Adult Literacy Learner	ESL Literacy Learner
Age Range	**16 and over**	**16 and over**
Educational Background	(i) School dropouts or failures, i.e. little or very interrupted post primary schooling). (ii) Early school leavers (limited post- primary schooling) (iii) Completed standard schooling to year 10 or 12 but masked lack of literacy skills.	(i) Successfully completed secondary or post-secondary education in their own language. (ii) Failed to complete schooling (iii) As for Adult Literacy learners (i) and (ii).
Employment History	(i) Never employed; school leaver. (ii) Never employed; home duties. (iii) Retrenched mid-life; seeking retraining. (iv) Accident victim leading to career change and need for retraining.	(i) Successfully employed in country of origin; qualifications unrecognised; therefore seeking retraining for Australian employment. (ii) As for Adult Literacy learner (i)-(iv).
Self-Esteem	Lack of previous success in formal education and employment may cause low self-esteem.	(i) Loss of usual skills as a communicator and dependence on others to translate (e.g. children) can cause low self-esteem. (ii) Loss of economic and social status can cause low self-esteem. (iii) As for Adult Literacy learner.
Other Affective Factors	(i) The Adult Literacy learner can be poorly motivated due to history of failures and exclusion through education. (ii) Fear of ridicule can be a strong characteristic. (iii) Anxiety can be high. (iv) Post-study expectations of e.g. successful employment, can be low. (v) Family history may be tuned to expectation of failure. (vi) May have very extensive community networks.	(i) "Culture shock" may result in depressive behaviour. (ii) Anxiety can be high. (iii) May lack community access channels (e.g. absence of family members; lack of access to social and cultural activities).

Other Cognitive Factors	(i) Learner may lack learning strategies appropriate to literacy skills development. (ii) May have limited experience of successful learning.	(i) May lack learning strategies appropriate to learning a second language for communication purposes. (ii) May lack Roman script skills differences in the construction of texts (iii) May lack understanding of cultural differences in the construction of texts for different purposes (e.g. use of salutations in letters). (iv) May have extensive literacy skills in first (or other) language(s). (v) May have access to other models of learning successfully.

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